

Unveiling:  
the Electoral Consequences of an Exogenous  
Mid-Campaign Court Ruling

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## Abstract

Strong evidence exists that major campaign-relevant events can have substantial impacts on vote intentions. We know less about how information about such events diffuses and why only some events become salient. We posit that voters often become aware of such exogenous events via a media mechanism. As the salience of the policy issue in the media increases, we argue that, under certain conditions, the media primes the voters to defect from their party and its leader. We investigate these processes by studying an unexpected court ruling during the 2015 Canadian federal election campaign. Based on difference-in-differences and text-as-data approaches, we find that an exogenous court ruling related to immigrant integration led to between a 5 and 11 percentage point decline in the leading party's support. Beyond modeling how campaign-relevant events become salient through the media, we provide evidence about circumstances where leaders should not expect party loyalty to override crystallized opinions.

**Keywords:** Campaign effects, immigration, natural experiment, media effects, Canada.

Supplementary material for this article is available in the online edition.

Replication files are available in the JOP Data Archive on Dataverse (<http://thedata.harvard.edu/dvn/dv/jop>).

Identifying the effects of campaign-relevant events on voter behavior is notoriously difficult (Erikson and Wlezien 2012). One approach investigates events beyond the control of politicians and evaluates these events' electoral impacts by exploiting surveys in the field at the time of these exogenous events (Muñoz et al. 2019). Within this approach, high-impact events such as natural disasters or terrorist attacks have received the most scholarly attention (e.g., Achen and Bartels 2016; Balcells and Torrats-Espinosa 2018). We investigate a different type of high-impact event—a court ruling.

Little is known about both the mechanism through which voters become aware of campaign-relevant events and the circumstances under which they are then primed to make the issues raised by such events a central part of their voting calculations (Iyengar and Kinder 2010). Theorizing why, under what conditions, and how exogenous events influence voting behavior requires scholars to closely examine issue types, diffusion mechanisms, and priming processes.

With respect to issue types, Lenz (2012) posits that, for policy issues, voters will follow their leader. Lenz provides evidence that as the salience of a policy issue increases, voters come to adopt their leader's or party's policy position. While often applicable, we argue that Lenz's theory has scope conditions. We focus on a two-part scope condition: high levels of crystallized opinion among the population (Tesler 2015) and a leader who holds a policy position out of line with the crystallized opinion. We theorize that, under these conditions, as the salience of a policy issue increases, voters may defect from the leader or party. We anticipate that electoral defection may be particularly common in systems with weak partisan attachment, such as Canada and Western Europe (Dalton 2004).

Like others, we observe that at times a leader may hold a view out of line with their constituents' preferences on a given issue (Butler and Dynes 2016). A leader who holds such an unpopular opinion may not suffer electorally, even if voters hold crystallized opinions on the issue, when the issue is not part of the current public discourse (Edwards et al. 1995). However, an exogenous event can increase media attention to this issue during an electoral campaign. The salience of the issue may then be heightened for voters, who may consequently be primed to change their voting behavior. Under such conditions, a leader can then lose support.

We posit that the mechanism by which the exogenous event increases the public awareness of an event is media coverage. Although the existing literature often assumes that an entire electorate is made immediately aware of high-impact events (e.g. Bali 2007; Bechtel and Hainmueller 2011), instant and complete diffusion of event-related information is often unrealistic, particularly for an event such as a court ruling. Instead, diffusion is a gradual process whereby an exogenous event can induce increased coverage and attention of an issue that gradually heightens its salience and can lead to priming.

To demonstrate this media mechanism and the scope conditions for Lenz’s argument, we leverage an exogenous shock that occurred during the 2015 Canadian federal election. While many electoral campaigns across the developed world have focused on immigrant integration issues in recent years, these issues arose in the 2015 Canadian federal election campaign only after an unexpected court ruling in which the country’s Federal Court of Appeal affirmed the right for women to wear the niqab (a face veil worn by some Muslim women) during their Oath of Citizenship ceremony. This decision was not supported in the large province of Quebec, where, for historical and cultural reasons, the population displays far lower levels of support for religious accommodation than does the population in the rest of Canada (Turgeon et al. 2019).

Prior to the ruling on September 15th, 2015, polls estimated the three major political parties—the Liberal Party of Canada (LPC), the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC), and the New Democratic Party (NDP)—to be at parity across Canada, each with 30% of decided voters. Moreover, and despite their previously declared support for women to take a citizenship oath wearing the niqab, the NDP was leading in Quebec, with approximately 45% of decided voters.<sup>1</sup> The NDP stuck to its position in the weeks after the ruling and was subsequently crushed at the ballot box on October 19th, notably losing most of its seats in Quebec.

## **The Effect of the Court Ruling on Media Coverage**

In line with our argument that media coverage heightens the salience of a policy issue associated with a campaign-relevant event, we present results from an original data set of

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<sup>1</sup>Based on Local Parliament Project data from August 25th to Sep 14th,  $n = 1936$ .

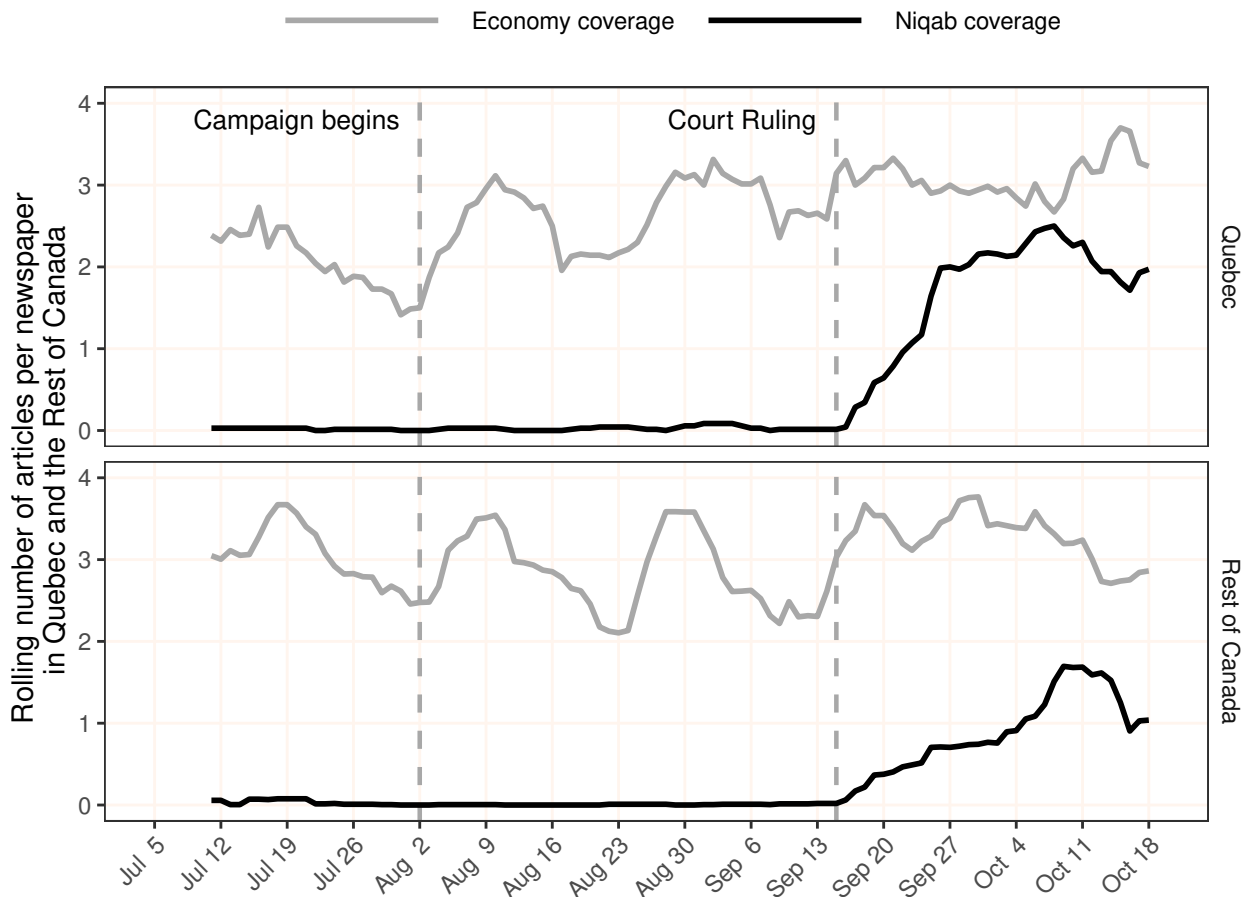


Figure 1: Media coverage in Quebec and the rest of Canada during the 2015 campaign (7-day rolling average), see Appendix A for descriptive statistics and data collection strategy.

French- and English-language print media coverage from July 1—October 31, 2015 that mentions either the niqab or the economy (a baseline campaign-relevant coverage category). Figure 1 shows that there was effectively no discussion of the niqab ban in the media prior to the court ruling; after September 15th, the media paid substantial attention to the issue in both Quebec and the rest of Canada. In Quebec, the court ruling had a strong effect on media coverage that peaked at a daily rate akin to coverage of the economy, while in the rest of Canada, coverage peaked at approximately half that of the coverage of the economy.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Appendix B details the context of the election and the distinct attitudes of Quebecers and rules out alternative explanations. Appendix C discusses the exogeneity of the court ruling and provides estimates of the causal effect of the ruling on media coverage.

## Individual-Level Analysis

The media coverage shown in Figure 1 and statistical treatment in Appendix C indicate a strong media response to the court ruling. Given this causal effect and the NDP’s opposition to the niqab ban, we turn to evaluating the impact of the court ruling on their electoral support. To do so, we rely on two sources: the same media coverage dataset visualized above and the 2015 Canadian Election Study (CES).

With the CES data (Fournier et al. 2015), we employ a difference-in-differences (DID) design with cross-sectional data to measure the impact of the ruling.<sup>3</sup> As both Quebec and the other Canadian provinces were exposed to the court ruling, our models estimate the heterogeneous effects of the event, with the Quebec residents as the treatment group.

For all models, the outcome variable is an indicator of whether the respondent intends to vote for the NDP (1) or is either undecided or intends to vote for any other party (0). We rely on Linear Probability Models for our main DID estimations (a strategy endorsed by Hellevik 2009). We focus on the interaction of two variables: the niqab court ruling and residence in Quebec. Specifically, the niqab court ruling variable is binary and scores 0 up to and including September 15th and 1 starting on September 16th, the day after the decision. The Quebec dummy variable registers whether a respondent is a resident of Quebec. We run specifications both with and without standard controls used in the Canadian context (Gidengil 2013) and find reliably similar results.<sup>4</sup>

We supplement our main models with two additional approaches. First, we employ a text-as-data approach showing how the media strongly and negatively associated the NDP with the niqab ruling. Second, we use CES panel data showing how voters with crystallized opinions were primed on the issue.

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<sup>3</sup>DID can be employed with both panel and cross-sectional data, although the latter strategy is less frequent (Lechner 2011).

<sup>4</sup>Appendix D details our DID empirical strategy and provides balance checks for respondents’ as-if randomization and evidence for the parallel trend assumption.

## Individual-Level Results

Table 1 displays the results for several DID models with controls. Model 1 shows a naive estimation, which assumes a sharp discontinuity. In this model, the exogenous event was significant and negative for the NDP in Quebec: the model coefficient (`Ruling x Quebec`) indicates an almost 11-point drop in the 33-day post-ruling period.

Table 1: The effects of the niqab ruling on vote intention for the NDP

	1: Binary DID	2: Linear Trend	3: 7-day media
DID effects			
Ruling x Quebec	-10.62 (2.60)*	-0.03 (4.12)	
Trend x Quebec		-0.59 (0.18)*	
7-day niqab x Quebec			-0.67 (0.25)*
Other coefficients			
Constant	15.45 (4.13)*	15.32 (4.13)*	14.95 (4.18)*
Voted NDP 2011	48.98 (1.55)*	48.87 (1.55)*	48.95 (1.34)*
Ruling	-2.69 (1.51)	-2.51 (2.33)	
Quebec	8.32 (2.93)*	7.92 (2.93)*	7.61 (2.68)*
Trend		-0.01 (0.11)	
7-day niqab			-0.32 (0.21)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.28	0.29	0.28
Num. obs.	3789	3789	3789

\* $p < 0.05$ . Linear probability models for DID estimations with robust standard errors for Models 1 and 2 and clustered standard errors at the day level for Model 3 in parentheses. Dependent variable is vote intention for the NDP (binary variable). All models use full CES web sample.

However, a sharp discontinuity in levels of electoral support is unrealistic. Few Canadians are made immediately aware of technical court rulings. Unlike a terrorist attack or a natural disaster, coverage of such an event develops over the subsequent weeks (as shown in Figure 1). Therefore, as we have argued, voters will gradually be exposed to information and subsequently react. This reasoning suggests that the effect of the ruling would not be sudden, but rather the result of increased salience over time. To test this, Model 2 introduces a variable that accounts for a post-September 15th linear trend. The variable scores 0 up to and including September 15th and afterwards it counts the number of days since the 15th (the first stories appeared on September 16th).

As expected, when we include both the court ruling dummy and the linear trend in Model 2 of Table 1, the effect of the interaction between Quebec and the ruling disappears,

while the coefficient for the post-ruling trend for respondents in Quebec ( $\text{Trend} \times \text{Quebec}$ ) is negative (0.59-percentage points).<sup>5</sup> We find that the effect of the ruling is approximated by a linear trend which links the September 15th event with the drop in support for the NDP in Quebec. Vote intention in the rest of Canada neither experiences a sharp discontinuity nor a downward linear trend in the post-ruling period.

The linear trend proxies here for the increased salience of the issue, as days passed since the ruling are not themselves consequential. We theorize that the media increases the salience of the niqab issue and primes voters to place the issue centrally in their vote evaluations. We thus model vote intention as a function of media coverage.

## Media Mechanism

To estimate the relationship between increased salience and NDP support, we substitute the court ruling dummy and linear trend with a measure of media coverage that approximates the informational environment of the campaign. We match each respondent sampled with a media environment measure, based on their location and date of their interview, that captures a rolling sum of niqab coverage for the previous week. Model 3 displays these results.

The data show a strong association: for every story published on the niqab in the previous seven days in the average Quebec newspaper, support for the NDP vote in Quebec dropped by approximately 0.67 percentage points ( $7\text{-day niqab} \times \text{Quebec}$ ). A hypothetical Quebec-based individual sampled on October 5th (two weeks before the election) who read only one newspaper would have been exposed to an average of 16 articles on the niqab over the previous week and the model estimates they would be 10 points less likely to indicate vote intention for the NDP relative to a respondent interviewed on September 15th. The volume coverage of the niqab over the previous week is associated with a steep decline in support for the NDP among Quebec voters. There is no similar effect found in vote intentions in the rest of Canada. When coupled with the causal relationship between the court ruling and the media coverage of the niqab issue, our model indicates that the ruling exerted a

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<sup>5</sup>See Appendix E for tests and robustness checks confirming that the data show a trend and not a clear discontinuity.



pronounced effect on electoral support for the NDP.<sup>6</sup>

## Text Analysis

Students of Canadian politics might observe that the LPC and the NDP held similar positions towards the niqab before and during the 2015 campaign, but we have shown that the niqab issue particularly hurt the NDP in Quebec and not the LPC. If the media coverage simply informed voters of party positions, then support for the LPC should have decreased in a manner similar to the NDP, while parties whose positions were more in line with mainstream Quebec-opinion should have benefited. To solve this puzzle, we must consider the media associations and evaluations in the diffusion process.

To do so, we perform two forms of text analysis on Quebec print articles that mention the niqab ( $n = 489$ ). We use two hierarchical dictionary count (proximity count) methods, looking both at associations and sentiment. First, we test whether the media was more critical of the NDP than the LPC during the election campaign. We identify key terms associated with both parties. We then use the French-language Lexicoder sentiment dictionary (Duval and Pétry 2016) to identify negative and positive sentiment in proximate word tokens (15 words in either direction) to the party-affiliated words. We find that tokens proximate to NDP-associated terms are more negative than those of the LPC-associated terms (mean difference of 5%,  $p = 0.03$  for an article-based t-test). A “net tone” analysis (Lowe et al. 2011) confirms the difference ( $p = 0.03$ ).

Second, we test for association between mentions of the niqab and the NDP to determine whether this issue is being specifically linked with the NDP. We check the frequency of NDP- and LPC-mentions across our article sample. Here we find large differences, with the NDP-associated terms appearing much more frequently in the articles as compared with the LPC-associated ones (3.68 versus 2.20 average mentions per article,  $p = 0.0007$  for a daily average t-test). Media coverage during the election strongly and negatively associated the

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<sup>6</sup>We show strong robustness of our estimation strategies in Models 2 and 3 to alternative specifications and a different survey sample, all with substantively similar results, as reported in Appendix F.

NDP with the crystallized issue of religious accommodation.<sup>7</sup>

## Panel Data Results

We find a strong effect of the court ruling on media coverage related to the niqab ban, a proxy for religious accommodation, and on vote intentions. To show how the media primed the niqab ban issue for Quebec voters, we present results of individual-level panel data analysis from the CES. If priming occurred, we would expect that those in favor of the ban would be less likely to express vote intention for the NDP once the issue became primed (after the ruling). To test this expectation, we use a post-election question asking whether the respondent is in favor of a ban on the niqab during citizenship ceremonies to identify individual positions on the issue. As expected, those in Quebec who responded to the pre-election survey prior to the court ruling and were in favor of the ban were equally likely, as compared to those against a ban, to express vote intentions for the NDP (39.6% versus 37.8%). This indicates that their position on the issue was not integral to their vote decision for the NDP at the time of their survey. However, after September 15th, with the issue becoming more salient through media coverage, the same comparison shows that those who were in favor of a ban were far less likely to indicate vote intention for the NDP (20.3% versus 27.6%). There is no evidence that these results are driven by the timing of the survey—all respondents in the pre-election survey (both those who replied before and after the ruling) later self-report voting for the NDP at similar levels and have similar support for the ban, as measured in the post-election survey. Model-based difference-in-differences estimates find similar effect sizes ranging from a 5 to 8 percentage point difference.<sup>8</sup>

This panel analysis provides evidence for our priming explanation: an important mid-campaign shift occurred where the niqab ban issue went from a marginal consideration to one central to the evaluations of voters with crystallized (negative) opinions on the niqab ban. The same comparisons for those residing in the rest of Canada or those who are against the ban do not show any difference.

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<sup>7</sup>Appendix G visualizes the media tone and mentions during the campaign, provides illustrative passages from the media analysis, and details the methods we employ.

<sup>8</sup>Appendix H provides these and other details and statistical tests.

## Conclusion

Our analysis uses an unexpected court ruling to shed light on two important and difficult to study phenomena: how policy issues become salient during campaigns and how voters react to newly salient policy issues. First, we have shown a media process through which a policy issue becomes salient and the electorate is primed to think about it. Second, we have shown how the electorate reacts when a party (and its leader) maintains its position on the newly salient policy issue when such a position conflicts with the electorate's crystallized opinion. Indeed, contrary to some previous research from the United States, our case demonstrates that policy issues can matter for vote choice and voters may reject the policy leadership of politicians.

Our case thus provides empirical evidence for placing scope conditions on Lenz's (2012) follow-the-leader theory. We examine a case where voters hold crystallized views on a policy issue. In these circumstances, we demonstrate that Lenz's argument that voters generally disregard policy information may not always hold. We show that, for a certain type of issue, policy information may become electorally relevant through priming, and voters may choose not to follow their leader. Admittedly, we expect these scope conditions to apply in situations of weaker partisanship, such as Canada and Western Europe (Dalton 2004), but also in mid-level democracies with nascent partisanship, such as Mexico (Greene 2011). We urge more research to take up cases similar to ours to further test our claims.

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Supporting Information:

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# Appendices

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## A Data sources and descriptive statistics

### A.1 Data sets employed - information and descriptive statistics

For the Canadian Election Study (CES), we employ the pre-election web sample alongside several questions drawn from the re-sample in the post-election survey. More information about the sample sizes, response rates, and the sampling procedures of the poll is available at <https://ces-eec.arts.ubc.ca/english-section/surveys/> (Retrieved: 27/10/2019). We use only high quality CES responses as per Breton et al. (2017), although the findings hold to the full dataset. We do not employ weights in the main models, however, their inclusion does not alter the results.

Table A-1: Descriptive statistics for CES data (web sample)

	Variable	n	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max
1	NDP Vote Intention	5624	0.25	0.43	0.00	0	1
2	Liberal Vote Intention	5624	0.24	0.43	0.00	0	1
3	Conservative Vote Intention	5624	0.19	0.39	0.00	0	1
4	Favor of Niqab Ban	3284	0.68	0.47	1.00	0	1
5	Age	5970	47.73	17.10	49.00	18	93
6	Female	6013	0.50	0.50	1.00	0	1
7	French	6023	0.36	0.48	0.00	0	1
8	Quebec	6023	0.38	0.49	0.00	0	1
9	Working	5771	0.53	0.50	1.00	0	1
10	Student	5771	0.08	0.27	0.00	0	1
11	Retired	5771	0.25	0.43	0.00	0	1
12	No High School	5983	0.07	0.26	0.00	0	1
13	High School	5983	0.43	0.50	0.00	0	1
14	Bachelor's Degree	5983	0.40	0.49	0.00	0	1
15	Graduate Studies	5983	0.10	0.30	0.00	0	1
16	Vote for NDP in 2011	4155	0.32	0.46	0.00	0	1
17	Feeling towards Conservative Party	5891	37.56	31.46	34.00	0	100
18	Feeling towards Liberal Party	5864	50.39	28.54	55.00	0	100
19	Feeling towards NDP	5727	54.62	27.23	60.00	0	100
20	Feeling towards the Bloc Quebecois	5297	26.82	28.91	17.00	0	100
21	Feeling towards Harper	5227	34.18	31.65	29.00	0	100
22	Feeling towards Trudeau	5160	50.74	29.40	56.00	0	100
23	Feeling towards Mulcair	4923	55.01	26.68	60.00	0	100
24	Feeling towards Duceppe	4441	33.87	29.38	30.00	0	100
25	Post-Court decision	6023	0.57	0.49	1.00	0	1
26	Post-Court decision linear trend	6023	10.30	11.50	6.00	0	34

For the original dataset of print news articles, data was gathered from Lexis-Nexis for

English-language media and Eureka for French-language media for the period from July 1, 2015 to November 1, 2015. Full text was also gathered for French-language media. Full-period coverage is available for the following English-language newspapers:

- The Gazette
- The Star Phoenix
- Windsor Star
- The Leader-Post
- Ottawa Citizen
- The Globe and Mail
- The Vancouver Sun
- The Daily Gleaner
- The Telegraph-Journal
- The Calgary Herald
- The Times & Transcript
- Times Colonist
- The Toronto Star
- Sherbrooke Record
- National Post's Financial Post & FP Investing
- National Post
- The Vancouver Province
- Waterloo Region Record
- Edmonton Journal
- The Hamilton Spectator
- The Guelph Mercury
- Yukon News
- North Shore News
- Guelph Tribune
- Waterloo Chronicle
- Carstairs Courier
- Brampton Guardian
- Ottawa West News
- The Mississauga News
- Stratford Gazette.

And for the following French-language newspapers:

- La Presse

- Le Devoir
- La Tribune
- Le Droit (an Ottawa-based journal that is nevertheless read in Quebec)
- L'Actualite
- Le Nouvelliste
- Le Soleil
- Journal de Montreal
- Metro
- 24H.

We do not include televised or social media in our media dataset. Druckman (2005) finds that television and print media, while they differ in the quantity of coverage, generally do not differ in terms of content.

Descriptive statistics for the data employed in Figure 1 and Table 1 (Model 3) are found in Tables A-2 and A-3.

Table A-2: Descriptive statistics for media data (rest of Canada)

	Variable	n	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max
1	Daily niqab coverage	110	9.35	19.08	0.00	0	93
2	Rolling sum of niqab coverage (7 days)	110	1.97	3.36	0.10	0	12
3	Cumulative coverage of niqab	110	5.31	8.87	1.10	0	34
4	Daily economy coverage	110	89.83	47.96	96.50	2	182
5	Rolling sum of economy coverage (7 days)	110	611.72	131.69	631.50	43	791
6	Cumulative coverage of economy	110	163.25	95.43	157.75	1	329

Table A-3: Descriptive statistics for media data (Quebec-only)

	Variable	n	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max
1	Daily niqab coverage	110	5.93	10.88	0.00	0	47
2	Rolling sum of niqab coverage (7 days)	110	3.69	6.05	0.20	0	18
3	Cumulative coverage of niqab	110	9.98	17.73	1.10	0	65
4	Daily economy coverage	110	26.48	15.02	26.50	1	80
5	Rolling sum of economy coverage (7 days)	110	179.26	44.73	190.50	9	259
6	Cumulative coverage of economy	110	134.95	84.70	124.40	1	291

## A.2 Evolution of vote intention and party identification

As Figures A-1 and A-2 show, partisanship is highly unstable over the course of the campaign. This is consistent with previous research that has shown that partisanship in Canada is generally much more flexible than in the United States (Clarke and Stewart 1987). This observed lack of stability informs our decision not to include partisanship as a control variable in the estimated models and to rather focus on the reported vote in the 2011 Canadian federal election (which is more stable over time, see the discussion below). In this manner, we avoid post-treatment bias.

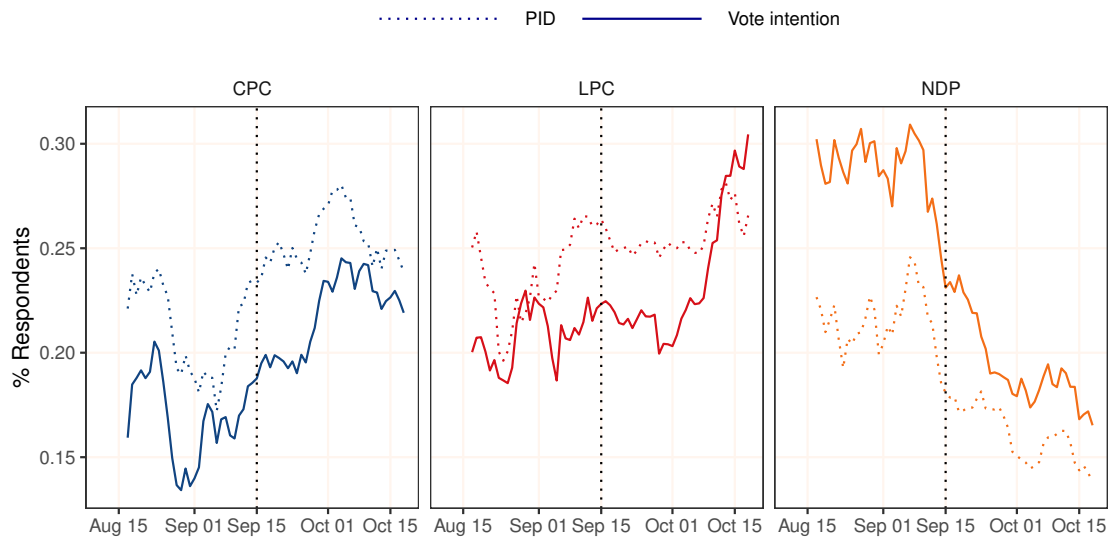


Figure A-1: The evolution of the vote intention and party identification (PID) for the main parties across the campaign in the rest of Canada (7-day moving average, CES data)

There is some evidence that a retrospective question on vote in the previous election may vary with current vote intention. We assess this threat by modelling the variable across the campaign with a linear trend and post-court ruling variable. While there is variance in self-reported vote in the 2011 Canadian federal election, this is to be expected and there is no clear trend in Quebec that indicates that respondents are claiming vote for the NDP in 2011 when they did not or vice versa. Neither are significant with or without controls. See Figure A-3 for a visualization of self-reported vote over the campaign.

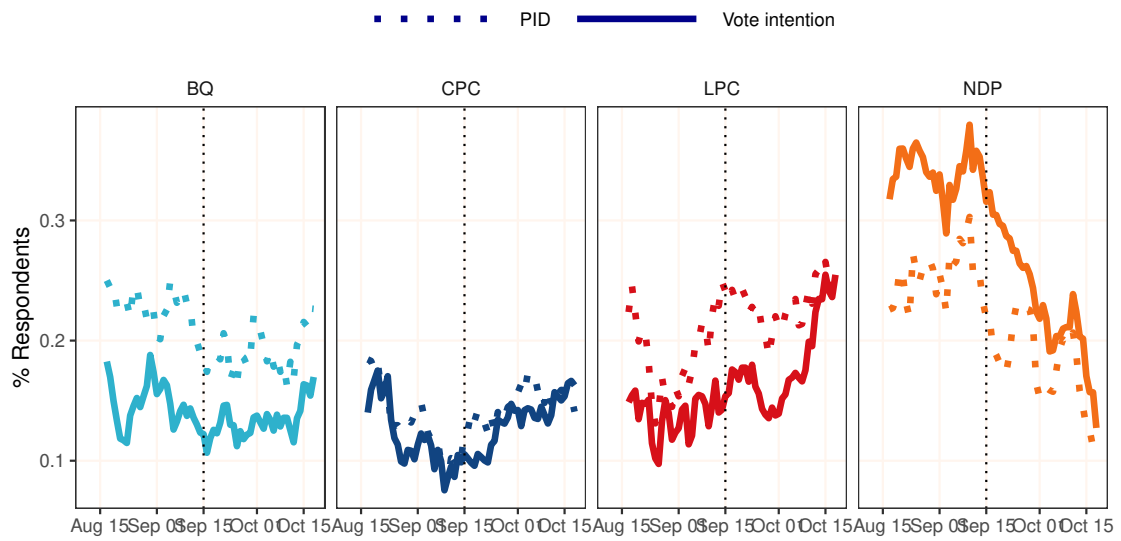


Figure A-2: The evolution of the vote intention and party identification (PID) for the main parties across the campaign in Quebec (7-day moving average, CES data)

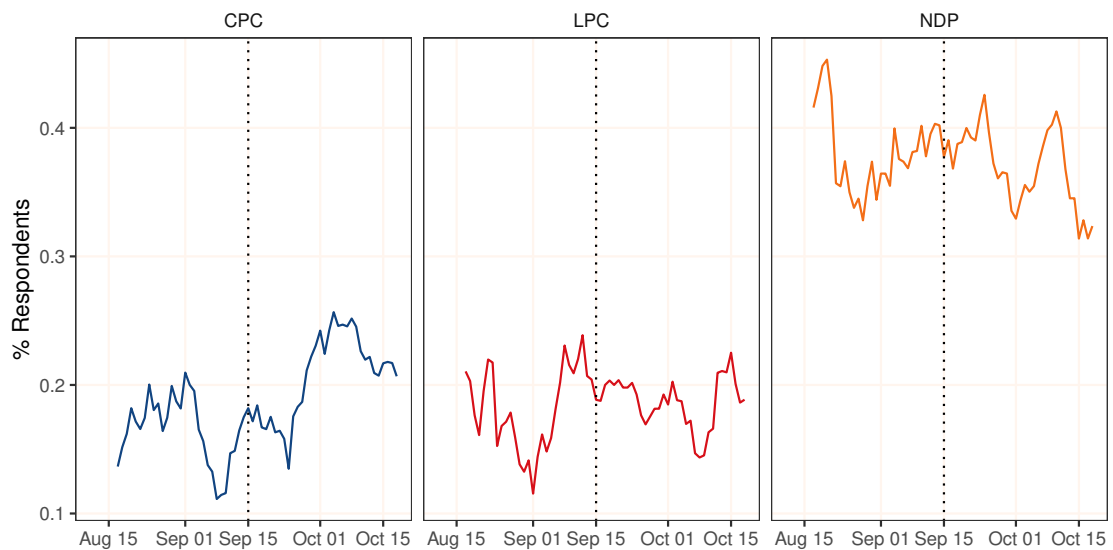


Figure A-3: Self-reported vote in 2011 for the main parties across the campaign in Quebec (7-day moving average, CES data)

## **B The 2015 Canadian federal election**

### **B.1 The context of the 2015 Canadian federal election**

The campaign for the 2015 Canadian federal election was a highly competitive one, with each of the three major political parties, the Liberal Party of Canada (LPC), the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC), and the New Democratic Party (NDP) leading in the polls at some point during the last month of the campaign. The CPC, led by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, had held power since 2006 but was weighed down by low approval rating and strong negative partisanship. Meanwhile, the NDP had achieved its best performance ever in the previous 2011 election and was, at least initially, understood to be the front-runner of the campaign; they also held a particularly strong lead in Quebec. The LPC, for their part, has historically been the best-performing federal party and their 2011 performance was far below expectations with them dropping to third place for the first time since Canadian Confederation in 1867. The election began in a fairly straightforward way, with parties jockeying for ownership over the issue that was widely considered to be the most important: the economy.

By September 14th, the three parties were polling roughly equally on the national level with around 30% of decided voters each, and the NDP continued to enjoy historical highs in the province of Quebec. Then, on September 15th, 2015, the Federal Court of Appeal released a court ruling that affirmed the right for women to wear the niqab during an oath of citizenship ceremony. The day after, the Prime Minister from the CPC stated that the government would appeal the decision. Over the following week, Thomas Mulcair, the leader of the NDP, clarified the party's position as against any sort of ban of the niqab both in public and during the citizenship ceremony. On September 24th, the results of a government poll conducted the previous March were released which showed that 93% of the Quebec population indicated support for a ban. However, see Figure B-3 below for CES results which show 78% of Quebecers held this opinion.

On the same day, the first French language debate took place, where the leader of the NDP was attacked for his position by the leaders of the other parties. Two weeks later, the Federal Court of Appeal refused to suspend the ruling. Two weeks after that, Zunera Ishaq,

the woman behind the niqab court ruling, voted in a federal election which handed the NDP a major defeat with the LPC winning a majority government. Many observers noted that the niqab ruling coincided with a change in fortunes for the NDP. For the evolution of the NDP vote intention across the campaign, both in Canada and in Quebec, see Figures B-1 and B-2.

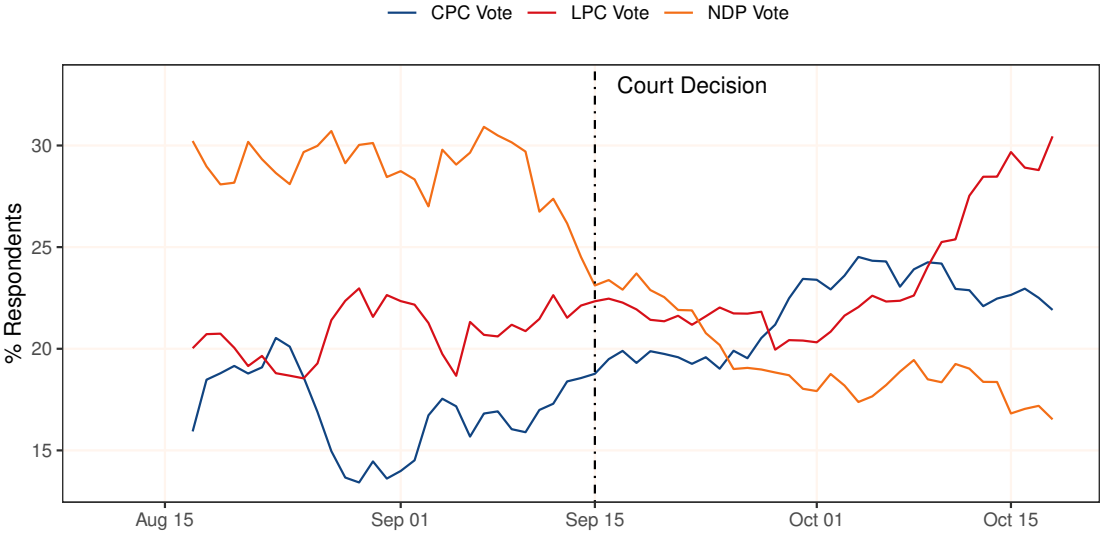


Figure B-1: The evolution of the vote intention for the main parties across the campaign (7-day moving average, CES data)

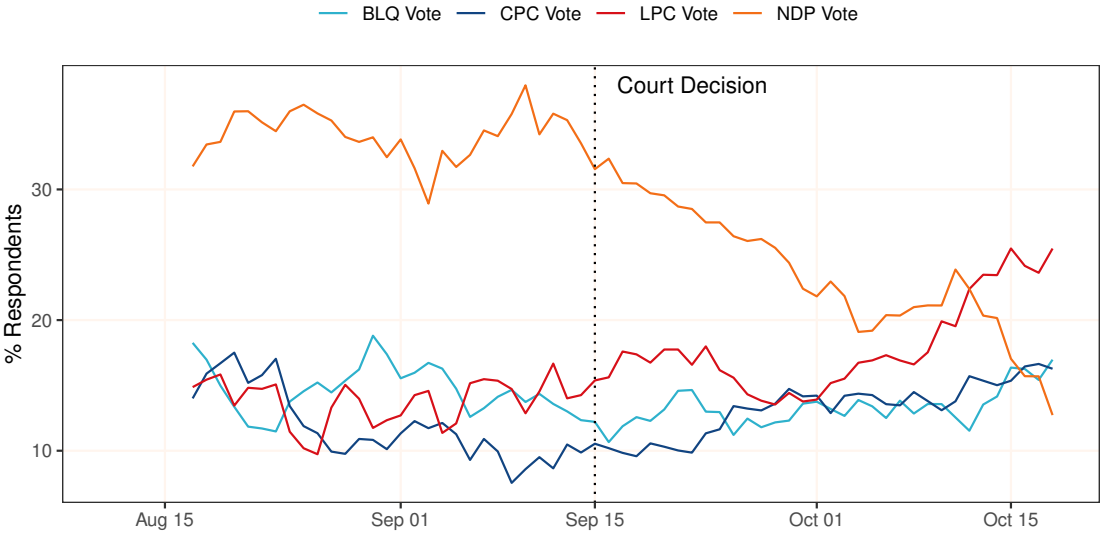


Figure B-2: The evolution of the vote intention for the main parties across the campaign in Quebec (7-day moving average, CES data)

Much of the post-election analysis has focused on the NDP’s poor performance in Quebec,



where they lost the majority of their seats. There are several reasons for this focus. First, the NDP made an electoral breakthrough in Quebec in 2011, picking up an additional 45 seats in the province in what has been called the “orange wave” (Fournier et al. 2013). This was the first time the NDP had achieved significant electoral success in the province and thus the party did not have a lengthy relationship with their Quebec-based voters. This unusual circumstance meant that Quebec, which has historically supported the LPC (Johnston 2017), was a major site of political contestation during the election. All other major parties, along with the Bloc Québécois (the BQ is a regional Quebec-based party), felt that they could make gains in the province at the expense of the NDP. Second, as further described below, Quebecers have a strong and crystallized opinion on this issue—they strongly opposed the NDP position on this topic.

## **B.2 Religious symbols and the Quebec distinctiveness**

Canada has received commendations for welcoming and accommodating immigrants and has a comparatively successful history of religious minority and immigrant integration (Wright and Bloemraad 2012). However, Canadian political and media discourses have increasingly focused on Muslim women and, in particular, veiling in recent years (Feder 2018). Veiling has proven to be the loci of larger national conversations about multi- and inter-culturalism, immigration, and integration in Canada (Kassam and Mustafa 2017).

Within Canada, residents of the province of Quebec hold the strongest and most crystallized opinions (Tesler 2015) on integration and religion. Quebecers, particularly the majority French-speaking population, have a history of secularism and are the least religious Canadians. This secularism and lack of religiosity have been directly tied to low levels of support for religious accommodation. Dufresne et al. (2018) find that when asked about whether more should be done to accommodate religious minorities in Canada, only 13% of Quebecers agree whereas 38% of other Canadians do. The unique relationship of Quebecers to organized religion also has led progressive Quebecers to be more likely to express strong support for restrictions on minority religious symbols in the public sphere. Turgeon et al. (2019) find that an individual index of liberal values composed of opinions on access to abortion, support for gender-equality, support for gay marriage, support for assisted suicide, and the decriminalization of prostitution is strongly correlated with attitudes towards public displays

of religion. In Quebec, being liberal on these other positions is associated with opposition towards public displays of religion, whereas in the rest of Canada the opposite is true. The similarity of position towards public displays of religion for those on both the left and right of the political spectrum drives the overall higher levels of opposition in Quebec. Others have similarly found that feminist attitudes are correlated with opposition to religious symbols in Quebec (O’Neill et al. 2015). Beyond individual opinion, there has been a strong push for a secularism law by all major political parties in Quebec over the past two decades. In 2019, the Coalition Avenir Québec passed Bill C-21, which bans public employees in positions of authority from wearing clothing or items deemed religious symbols. There has been no such law tabled anywhere in the rest of Canada. When compared to the rest of Canada, Quebec is thus fertile ground for studying the electoral impact of religious symbols and integration related issues. This expectation is reflected in our empirical strategy to distinguish between the effect of the court ruling in Quebec as compared to the rest of Canada. Moreover, the crystallized public opinion on the niqab across Canada, and the particularly negative attitudes in Quebec, informs our expectation, tested in the paper, that the media coverage of this particular campaign event will prime the issue among Quebec voters.

To highlight the Quebec distinctiveness in terms of their attitude towards religious symbols, we rely on CES data. Specifically, Figure B-3 shows a Quebec distinctiveness, with Quebecers much more likely to favour a niqab ban and generally express lower support for Muslims as compared to those residing in the rest of Canada.

### **B.3 Alternative explanations**

Several alternative explanations for the NDP loss of support have been suggested in lieu of the niqab explanation; we consider three we have identified as the most significant barriers to inference. First, we address a confounder explanation where other campaign events and shocks may have been more important and the niqab, while it attracted significant media attention, did not actually influence voters’ opinions. Second, we investigate an observation that support for the NDP may have begun to drop in the week before the court ruling and thus the decision had little impact. Rather, a trend that began before the ruling merely continued. Third, we examine a strategic vote argument where some have observed that NDP support softened in the final weeks of the campaign as it became clear that the LPC

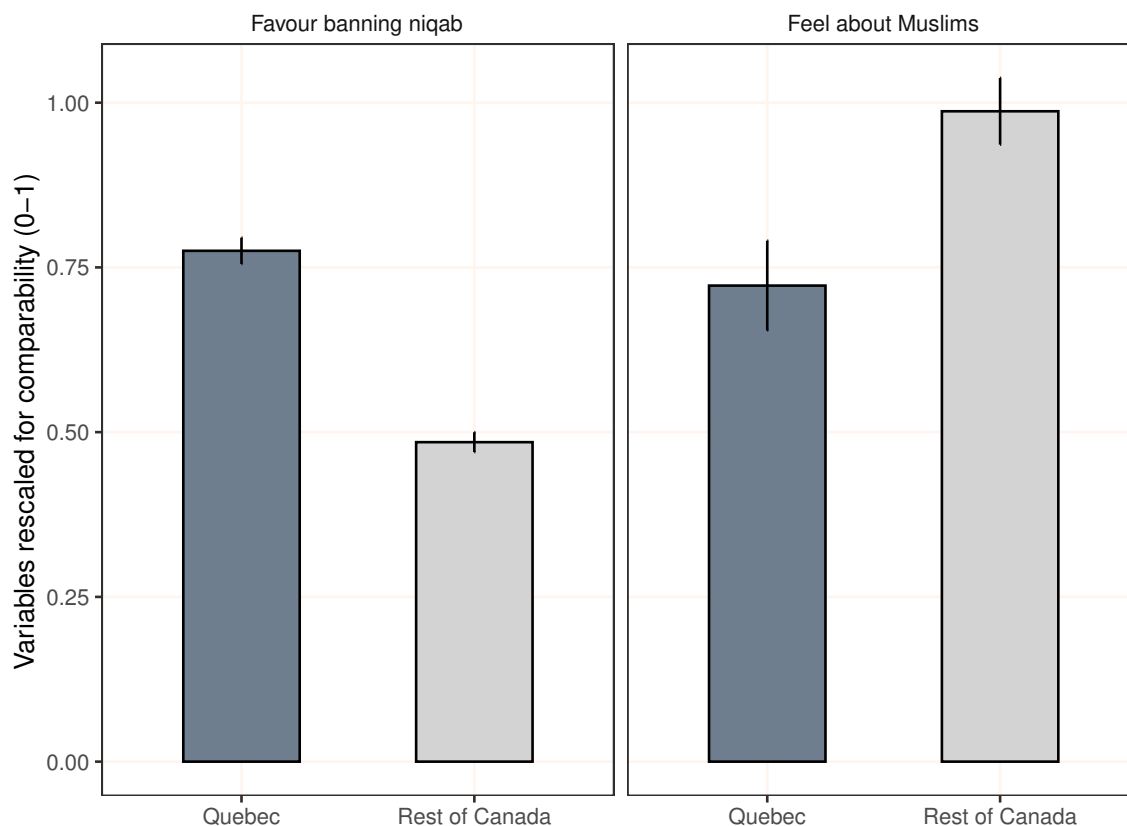


Figure B-3: Quebec distinctive opinion towards Muslims and the niqab ban

was the main alternative to the CPC government, which was widely disliked. We address each in turn.

The first alternative is the confounder explanation where it is previous or subsequent events that caused the decline rather than the niqab issue. Four other possible events stand-out during the campaign that are unrelated to the niqab ruling and could have had an effect: 1) a criminal trial for CPC Senator Mike Duffy where he was accused of 31 charges of fraud, bribery and breach of trust; 2) a promise to balance the budget by the otherwise left-leaning NDP and promised deficit spending by the centrist LPC; 3) campaign debates; and finally 4) when an image of a dead Syrian boy, three-year old Alan Kurdi found washed up on Turkish beach, made international headlines and prompted a renewed conversation around the processing of Syrian refugee applications. For one of these events to matter more than the niqab, we would need to be convinced, in addition to high salience, that the event would have heterogeneous effects for Quebecers relative to the rest of Canada and be contemporaneously correlated with the court ruling.

The Senate expense scandal had been ongoing for a long time and few major revelations emerged during the campaign. A question on the CES tracked whether respondents had heard about the Senate expense scandal and only 32% of non-Quebec Canadians and 24% of Quebecers indicated that they had heard any information about the issue during the past week and only 21% of Canadians and 18% of Quebecers indicated that they cared about this issue. This topic was less covered and cared about in Quebec and it cannot credibly explain the NDP's decline in that province.

The decision to balance the budget was a move by the NDP to attract more centrist voters and it is possible that this shifted their left-wing away to the LPC party. The CES included a question asking respondents about "What the federal government should do to help the economy: balance the budget or run a deficit." There is a small statistically relevant (t-test) difference between Quebec and the rest of Canada, with Quebecers being slightly more in favour of deficit spending, but the mean difference is only ~3 percentage points, and the inclusion of this variable in the regression models is non-significant on NDP vote choice. While we cannot disregard this possibility entirely, it is unclear why Quebecers would react more negatively to the balanced budget promise relative to those residing out of province with similar positions on the issue.

Another possibility that has been raised is leadership debate performances and other mechanisms by which the party leaders could have been re-evaluated by the electorate. To test this, we use party leader feeling thermometers and find that while there was some decline in Mulcair's support over the course of the campaign, and some increase in Trudeau's support, support for Trudeau remained lower than that of Mulcair in Quebec for the entire duration of the campaign, even in the last two weeks (about 5%,  $p = 0.002$ ).

Finally, the death of Alan Kurdi did spark a greater conversation during the campaign about the limited number of Syrian refugees Canada was accepting. Both the NDP and the LPC took strong positions on the issue and promised to increase resettlement efforts. While there is no question in the CES about the refugee crisis in Syria, overall support for immigration does not differ significantly between Quebec and the rest of Canada. The campaign also focused more heavily on the Syrian immigration issue in early September, prior to the dip in NDP support. More generally, the tests done to establish that there was

no sharp discontinuity at the September 15th break on vote intention also tested whether there were any sharp discontinuities over the course of the campaign. Results for the DID 7-day window tests, as shown in Appendix E, indicate that there was no other clear campaign event that produced a significant change from one week to the next.

A second alternative is that the dip in the NDP support occurred before September 15th and that this somehow produced a linear decline in NDP support for the duration of the campaign. This is simply not a credible explanation as a slight decline in one party's fortunes in no way determines the overall trend for the remaining duration of the campaign. However, to test this we subset our sample to before the September 15th date and add both a daily trend and a dummy for the week of September 8th-14th, with a null finding (see Appendix D). Additionally, our tests for discontinuity (Appendix E) indicate no such shift took place in the week before the ruling.

The third alternative explanation concerns the strategic vote. The presence of a strategic desertion vote from the NDP to the LPC and BQ in Quebec has been identified as a factor behind the NDP defeat in both academic and popular media. It is true that there was a recurring 'Anything but Conservative' campaign which called for centrist and leftist voters to vote strategically to avoid another Conservative government.<sup>1</sup> However, previous studies on strategic voting have shown a high potential but a less realized strategic vote; for example, Blais et al. (2009) investigate the amount of strategic voting in four Canadian federal elections (1988, 1993, 1997, and 2002) and show that, although the potential strategic vote varies between 10% and 15%, the realized strategic vote is between 2.2% and 3.8% of voters. For the 2015 Election, Daoust (2018) indicates a somewhat larger role for strategic deserters, and other analyses of the 2015 Canadian Election have similarly indicated a larger than usual role for strategic voting (McGrane 2016; O'Neill and Thomas 2016). However, even in a world of strategic voting for the LPC, why did the vote coalesce around them as opposed to the NDP? There must have been some shift that positioned the NDP as less-electable during the last week or two weeks of the campaign, and this effect must have

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<sup>1</sup>Campaigns like Vote Together which encouraged NDP, LPC, and BQ voters to vote for the local candidate who had the best chance against the CPC nominee in the riding were a part of the public discourse during the 2015 campaign.

been particularly strong in Quebec. To rule out that late strategic voting was the primary dynamic, we removed the last week of the campaign from the analyses performed above and the results hold. The following models found in Table B-1, build on models found in the body of the paper (Table 1), except that they exclude the last week of the campaign where strategic voting is most likely to occur. The results generally hold, except that the combined binary and linear trend treatments of the post-court ruling are not jointly significant; both the binary variable (the court ruling) and the linear trend have a substantive effect and are in the expected direction, however.

Table B-1: The effects of the niqab ruling on vote intention for the NDP

	1: DID Quebec	2: Trend Quebec	3: Both
Constant	15.01 (4.32) <sup>***</sup>	14.91 (4.28) <sup>***</sup>	14.99 (4.32) <sup>***</sup>
Voted NDP 2011	50.24 (1.63) <sup>***</sup>	50.25 (1.63) <sup>***</sup>	50.26 (1.63) <sup>***</sup>
Ruling	-3.30 (1.55) <sup>*</sup>		-0.87 (2.49)
Quebec	8.18 (2.98) <sup>**</sup>	7.25 (2.85) <sup>*</sup>	8.03 (2.98) <sup>**</sup>
Trend		-0.20 (0.08) <sup>*</sup>	-0.17 (0.14)
DID coefficients			
Ruling x Quebec	-7.50 (2.72) <sup>**</sup>		-3.68 (4.53)
Trend x Quebec		-0.41 (0.15) <sup>**</sup>	-0.25 (0.24)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.29	0.29	0.30
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.29	0.29	0.29
Num. obs.	3442	3442	3442
RMSE	37.68	37.65	37.66

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> $p < 0.001$ , <sup>\*\*</sup> $p < 0.01$ , <sup>\*</sup> $p < 0.05$ . Linear probability models for DID estimations with robust standard errors in parentheses. Dependent variable is vote intention for the NDP in the 2015 Canadian federal election (binary). All models use CES web sample but exclude the last week of the campaign.

Additionally, the niqab ruling and media explanations are not exclusive to strategic voting, the presence of strategic voting in the final days of the campaign is a function of rather than a cause of a less competitive NDP due to the niqab ruling.

## C Exogeneity of the court ruling

In the context of our research design, one key question is whether the introduction of the niqab issue into the campaign was truly exogenous. In March 2015, there had been a debate in the House of Commons on wearing a face-covering during the citizenship oath, and the ruling Conservative Party had some polling which indicated that Canadians generally agreed with their position and not that of the other major parties. Thus, Canadians were already aware of the issue, many held clear positions towards issues of religious accommodation and the Conservative Party saw the niqab as a key issue that could help them mobilize support. Given this threat to exogeneity, further work is needed to demonstrate the plausibility of the exogeneity of the court case.

There are three primary pieces of evidence for this exogeneity. First, the niqab was not initially considered an important issue during the 2015 campaign. The first leadership debate took place on August 6th and did not include a single mention of the niqab. Each election, The National Post produces detailed summaries of major party platforms. They did so on the first day of the campaign, and did not mention the niqab nor any party's policy on wearing it during citizenship ceremonies. Moreover, the sense among the media and pollsters and those commenting on the election was that there was only one issue on the mind of voters: the economy (see <http://angusreid.org/federal-election-2015-august26/> and <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-election-2015-grenier-podcast-aug26-1.3204891> (Retrieved: 27/10/2019)). Second, commentators from a broad range of political backgrounds have since noted how the niqab issue was unexpected, coincidental, and sudden in the campaign. A former director of CPC campaigns, Tom Flanagan, stated the niqab was an external factor and was "suddenly propelled to the fore by an unexpected decision from the bench of the federal court" (Flanagan 2015). Zunera Ishaq's legal advisor in her court challenge later stated "by sheer coincidence... the niqab ban was set down by the court case in the middle of the campaign" (Macklin 2017). These statements, and many others by a broad range of commentators, point towards the court ruling being the main factor in the rise of prominence of the niqab debate. Third, print media attention directed towards the niqab was virtually absent in the pre-court ruling period as shown in Figure 1. We provide

additional evidence in the form of a Google Trend plot (Figure C-1) which shows negligible interest in the niqab in Quebec in the pre-court ruling period.

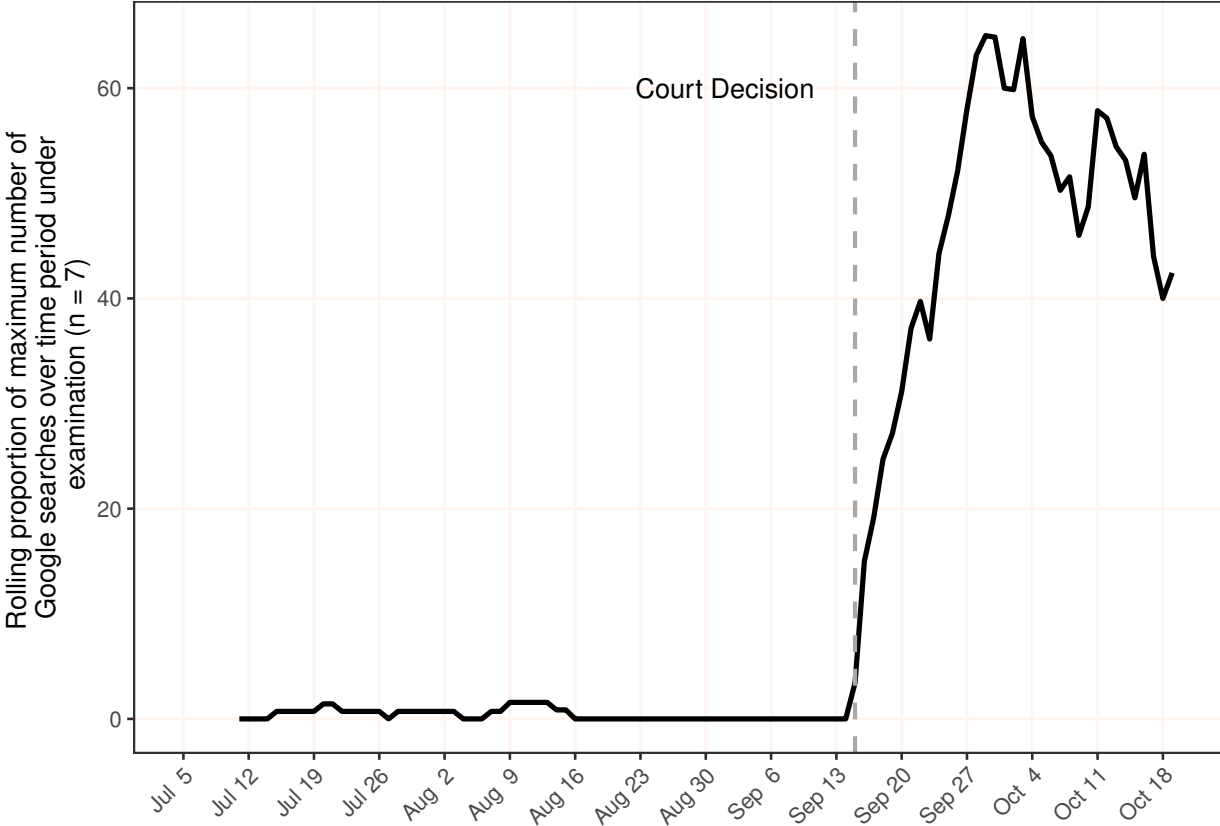


Figure C-1: Rolling Google search interest in the niqab in Quebec across the campaign

The sharp discontinuity in media coverage and search attention after the September 15th date provides compelling evidence that the court ruling was in fact an outside shock to the campaign.



## C.1 Causal effect of court ruling on niqab coverage

We formally demonstrate the causal effect of the court ruling on the niqab media coverage as graphically shown in the body of the paper (1) through a comparison between coverage of the niqab issue and the coverage of the economy during the period under examination. We employ a difference-in-differences strategy where each outcome observation (**Coverage**) is the total number of articles per day that mention either the economy or the niqab. The coefficient of interest is that of the interaction between whether the coverage pertained to the Niqab (**Niqab**) and whether the coverage occurred in the pre or post-court ruling period (**Ruling**). A post-ruling trend is also computed (**Trend**). We also include a daily trend (**Daily Trend**) to account for campaign dynamics, but find non-significance. As Canada has two distinct regional-linguistic media environments, we model Quebec and the rest of Canada separately.

$$\begin{aligned} Coverage_{rt} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 Niqab_r + \beta_2 Ruling_t + \gamma_1 Trend_{rt} + \\ & \beta_3 Niqab_r \times Ruling_t + \gamma_2 Niqab_r \times Trend_{rt} + \beta_1 Daily Trend_t + \varepsilon_{rt} \end{aligned} \quad (1)$$

Table C-1 shows the result of these estimations, with a daily campaign linear trend added for substantive reasons (see the discussion in the body of the paper) and as a robustness check. Here, as expected, we find an extraordinary effect in both Quebec and in the rest of Canada – observe the DID coefficients of interest,  $\beta_3$  and  $\gamma_2$ . The Quebec media has both an immediate and progressive reaction, whereas media in the rest of Canada develops significant media coverage over the election period. These models provide strong causal evidence that the court ruling sparked the media coverage of the niqab.

Put another way, there were four articles in the preceding week which mentioned the niqab in the sample of 40 English- and French-speaking newspapers: 0.014 stories per day per paper as compared to a post-ruling campaign high of almost 5 stories per day per paper in Quebec and 3 stories per day per paper in the rest of Canada.

Table C-1: Niqab and economy coverage during election

	Quebec	Rest of Canada
Constant	0.83 (0.08) <sup>***</sup>	0.76 (0.10) <sup>***</sup>
Daily campaign trend	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
Niqab Coverage	-0.82 (0.07) <sup>***</sup>	-0.73 (0.07) <sup>***</sup>
Ruling	0.07 (0.19)	0.28 (0.19)
Trend	0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
DID coefficients		
Niqab x Ruling	1.54 (0.55) <sup>**</sup>	0.71 (0.48)
Niqab x Trend	0.04 (0.03)	0.07 (0.03) <sup>*</sup>
R <sup>2</sup>	0.58	0.50
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.56	0.48
Num. obs.	156	156
RMSE	0.78	0.84

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> $p < 0.001$ , <sup>\*\*</sup> $p < 0.01$ , <sup>\*</sup> $p < 0.05$ . OLS models for DID estimations with robust standard errors in parentheses. Dependent variable is number of articles published per day (continuous variable).

## D Research design

### D.1 Details on estimation strategy

The equations for the models shown in the main text (Table 1) are presented below. Model 1 is captured in the Equation 2, with  $\beta_3$  indicating the key interaction term of interest where Quebec is an indicator variable for whether the individual is in Quebec and Ruling refers to whether the the response was measured before or after the ruling and  $X$  indicating a vector of covariates (i.e. region, age, gender proxy, mother tongue, employment status, formal education, and reported vote for NDP in 2011). In all of our equations,  $i$  indexes the individual and  $t$  indexes time.

$$\begin{aligned} NDP\_Vote_{it} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 Quebec_i + \beta_2 Ruling_t + \\ & \beta_3 (Quebec_i \times Ruling_t) + X'_{it} \omega + \varepsilon_{it} \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

Model 2 introduces a variable that accounts for a post-September 15th linear trend (**Trend**). The variable scores 0 up to and including September 15th and afterwards it counts the number of days since (the first stories appeared on September 16th). This allows us to test a Quebec-specific trend. The model changes to the following, with the addition of two  $\gamma$  terms which indicate the coefficients of interest for an overall linear trend as well as a Quebec-specific trend.

$$\begin{aligned} NDP\_Vote_{it} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 Quebec_i + \beta_2 Ruling_t + \gamma_1 Trend_t + \\ & \beta_3 (Quebec_i \times Ruling_t) + \gamma_2 (Quebec_i \times Trend_t) + X'_{it} \omega + \varepsilon_{it} \end{aligned} \tag{3}$$

Model 3 replaces the court ruling with a measure of media coverage at the individual-day level.

$$\begin{aligned} NDP\_Vote_{it} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 Quebec_i + \beta_2 Coverage_t + \\ & \beta_3 Quebec_i \times Coverage_t + X'_{it} \omega + \varepsilon_{it} \end{aligned} \tag{4}$$

## D.2 Balance tests

As we posit a natural experiment, the pre- and post-court ruling samples should be balanced. To confirm balance, we evaluate the standardized mean differences between the pre and post-court ruling periods. Figure D-1 shows that across demographic, attitudinal and self-reported behavioural measures the sample is balanced with all variables having a standardized mean difference of less than 0.1—a threshold identified in Stuart (2010) and Rosenbaum (2010). Another test for balance are equivalence tests as forwarded by Hartman and Hidalgo (2018) which allow us to reject the null hypothesis of difference between pre- and post-ruling samples ( $\epsilon$  set at default level of 0.2). These results are encouraging and show that the pre- and post-court ruling period samples are balanced. Given this balance, we validate the natural experiment setup.

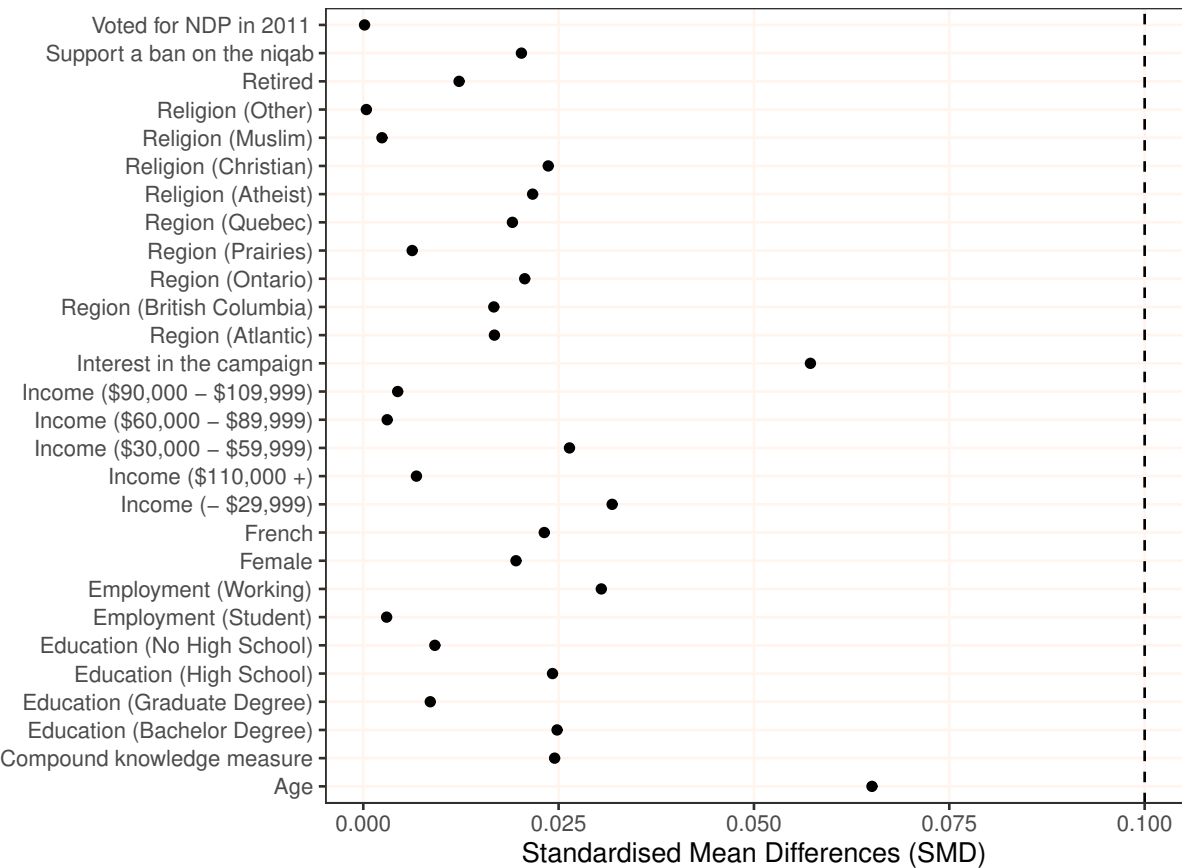


Figure D-1: Standardized mean differences balance test for pre- and post-court ruling samples (CES web sample)

As we also model an over-time trend in the post-court ruling period, day-to-day or week-to-week balance is desirable. We thus perform the same check comparing every week

to every other week in the post-ruling period. Figure D-2 shows the balance for weekly comparisons (using an SMD threshold of 0.1) and Figure D-3 for daily ones (using a more lenient SMD of 0.15 to account for small daily sample sizes), both on the web sample. The charts show, for each variable, the total number of week-to-week (day-to-day) imbalances relative to balances. For the weeks that is  $C(5, 2)$  or 15 comparisons and for days that is  $C(33, 2)$  or 528 comparisons. We examine only the post-court ruling period here as the pre- and post- balance has already been established and we are testing whether the trend in the post-ruling period may account for changing vote intentions. Results in the figures below show some week-to-week and day-to-day imbalance.

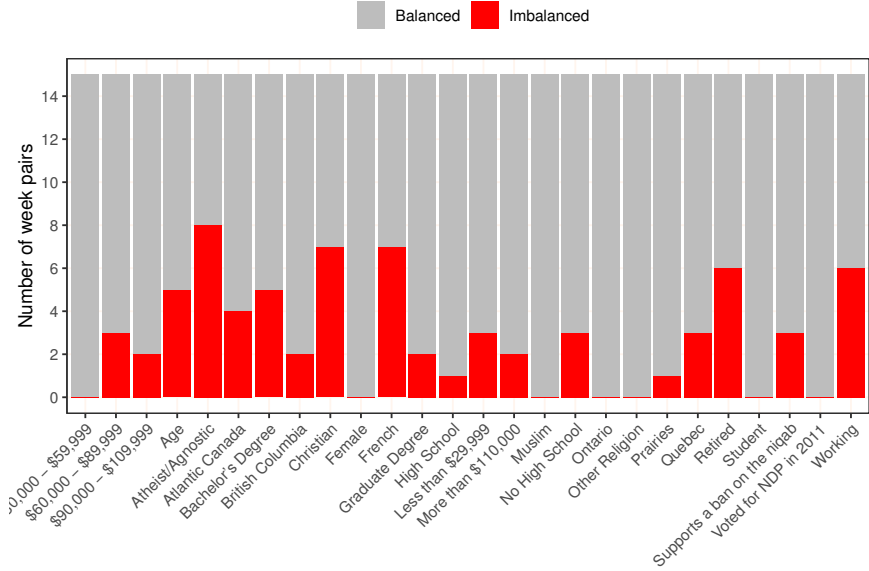


Figure D-2: Week-to-week standardized mean differences balance test (CES web sample)

While there is some week-to-week and day-to-day imbalance in the web sample, we perform the same tests on the phone sample in the CES which has a true randomized rolling cross section design (Johnston and Brady 2002, 2006) to determine whether the imbalance is systematic and pronounced. Figures D-4 and D-5 show the results. We find that the imbalance present in the web sample is similarly present in the rolling cross section phone one. The week-to-week standardized mean difference across the covariates for the web sample averages 0.059 (95% balanced), while the same comparison for the phone is 0.06 (96% balanced). For day-to-day comparisons, the web sample averages 0.143 (61% balanced) versus 0.128 (66%) for the phone sample. Even in a randomized design some

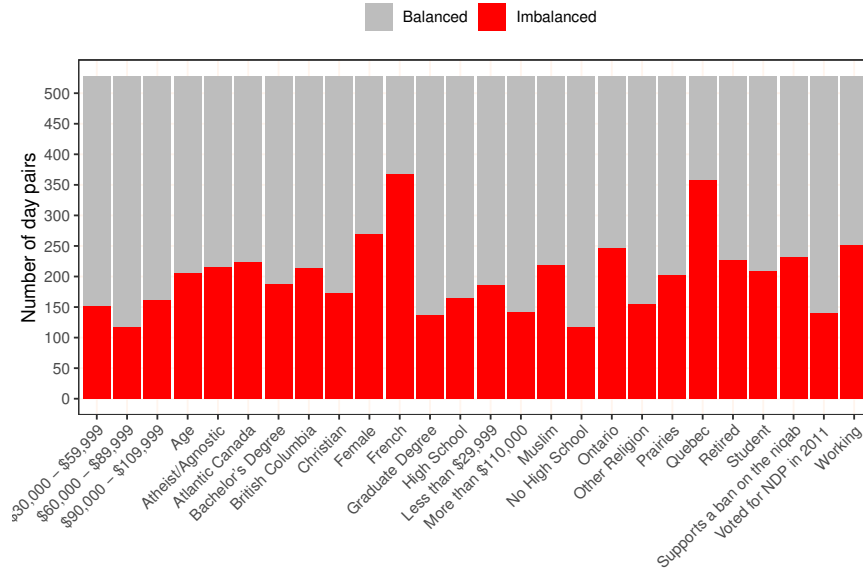


Figure D-3: Day-to-day standardized mean differences balance test (CES web sample)

imbalance is statistically probable, especially when using small daily sample sizes. We thus conclude that the imbalance in the web sample likely does not pose a threat to our research design.

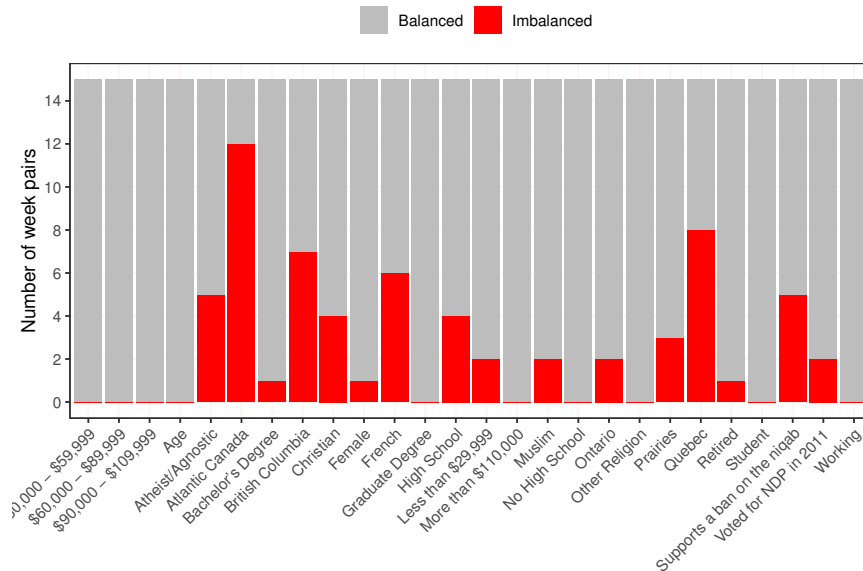


Figure D-4: Week-to-week standardized mean differences balance test (CES phone sample)

### D.3 Pre-period linear trend and placebo test

The following two tests show no pre-trend in relation to the evolution of the NDP vote intention before the court ruling. Table D-1 shows the first two models (with and without

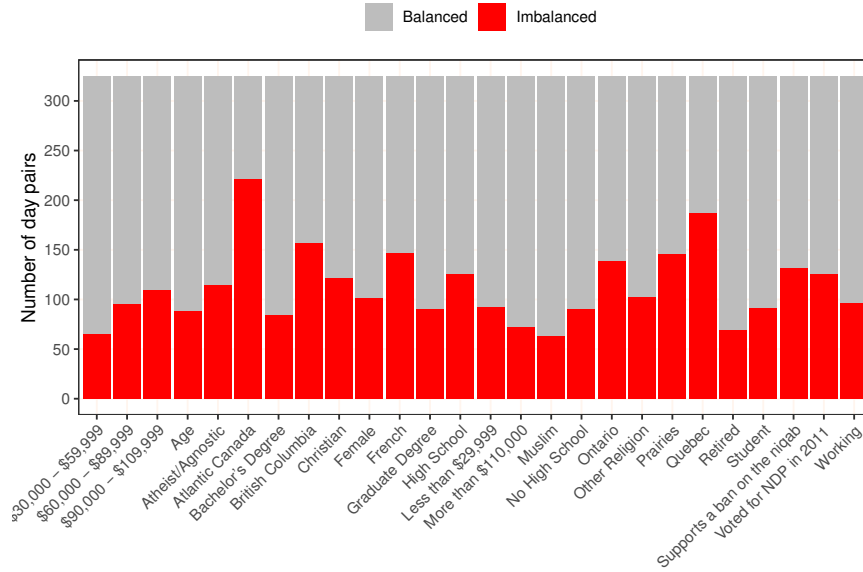


Figure D-5: Day-to-day standardized mean differences balance test (CES phone sample)

controls) that test for an overall pre-court ruling trend of a Quebec-specific linear trend. This is a common test for the parallel trend assumption and we find no pre-trend.

Table D-1: Pre-trend test for DID comparing Quebec and the Rest of Canada

	1: Pre-trend test (controls)	2: Pre-trend test (no controls)
Constant	14.48 (6.56)*	23.92 (2.03)***
Female	-4.17 (1.90)*	
Age	-0.03 (0.08)	
French	2.86 (3.68)	
British Columbia	2.20 (4.15)	
Ontario	-0.89 (3.18)	
Prairies	5.79 (3.58)	
Quebec	-0.76 (2.66)	
Working	1.84 (5.45)	
Student	0.88 (3.37)	
Retired	-1.85 (4.39)	
High School	-0.23 (4.38)	
Bachelor's Degree	2.61 (4.99)	
Graduate Degree	53.83 (2.04)***	
Vote 2011 NDP	0.04 (0.11)	-0.02 (0.11)
Pre-trend	5.92 (4.72)	9.71 (3.18)**
Pre-trend:Quebec	0.02 (0.18)	0.03 (0.17)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.32	0.01
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.31	0.01
Num. obs.	1704	2467
RMSE	38.49	44.61

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ . OLS estimations. Standard errors in parentheses. Dependent variable is vote for the NDP in the 2015 Canadian federal election (binary).

Table D-2 displays a placebo test where we see if there was movement in the week that

predated the court ruling. The models with and without controls show that there was no significant movement regarding NDP vote intentions in the week between September 8th and 15th in Quebec or in the rest of Canada.

Table D-2: Pre-trend test for DID comparing Quebec and the Rest of Canada

	1: Trend	2: 1-week dummy	3: 1-week dummy (controls)
Constant	23.92 (2.03)***	24.70 (1.36)***	14.13 (6.33)*
Pre-trend	-0.02 (0.11)		
Quebec	9.71 (3.18)**	9.10 (2.15)***	5.45 (4.00)
Pre-trend x Quebec	0.03 (0.17)		0.47 (4.26)
Sep 8		-1.88 (2.58)	-1.27 (2.70)
Sep 8 x Quebec		0.28 (4.12)	
Female			-4.14 (1.90)*
Age			-0.03 (0.08)
French			2.91 (3.68)
Atlantic			2.30 (4.15)
Prairies			-0.81 (3.18)
British Columbia			5.62 (3.58)
Working			-0.74 (2.66)
Student			1.69 (5.44)
Retired			0.83 (3.37)
High School			-1.84 (4.39)
Bachelor's Degree			-0.18 (4.38)
Graduate Degree			2.48 (4.99)
Vote 2011 NDP			53.82 (2.04)***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.01	0.01	0.32
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.01	0.01	0.31
Num. obs.	2467	2467	1704
RMSE	44.61	44.61	38.49

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ . OLS estimations. Standard errors in parentheses. Dependent variable is vote for the NDP in the 2015 Canadian federal election (binary). Sub-sample of respondents before September 15.

These pieces of evidence increase the confidence in the parallel trend assumption behind the DID estimation and confirm that what we observe is not determined by a drop in the NDP vote intention before the court ruling.



## E Discontinuities

### E.1 Regression discontinuity

The regression discontinuity estimations are performed using the `rdrobust` package in R (Calonico et al. 2015). For all the estimations, the dependent variable is the vote intention for the NDP in the 2015 Canadian federal election. The assignment variable registers the day the subjects were interviewed, with the cut-off point set at September 15th (e.g. for the respondents interviewed on September 14th the value of the variable is -1, while for those contacted on September 16th is 1). We employ a sharp RDD (i.e. the treatment variable is a deterministic function of the assignment variable, which means that all the observations after September 15th are considered treated – and get an value of 1 – and the ones before September 15th get a value of 0) with no controls (a decision that is justified by the balance of the sample, see Appendix D). The overall goal is to test whether a sharp discontinuity takes place around the cutoff date.

To test the robustness of the findings, we employ a diversity of bandwidths, either manually selected (3, 5, 7 or 9 days around the cutoff) or automatically, based on the IMSE-optimal selection procedure (the “`mserd`” option). In addition, we vary the polynomial order (1, 2 or 3). All the local linear regressions are estimated with a triangular kernel and the we display coefficients and standard errors based on the *robust* estimations proposed by Calonico et al. (2015).

Table E-1 looks at the Quebec sub-sample to identify whether a sharp discontinuity has taken place on September 15th. All the results allow us to reject the idea of a discontinuity around the date of the niqab ruling (see the p-values in each table).

For conformity, we also display our results graphically. Specifically, we show two plots for the Quebec sample obtained with the same `rdrobust` R package: 1) using a manually-selected bin width of 7; and 2) using a bandwidth automatically selected (`mserd`). All plots are based on a polynomial order of 1 and a triangular kernel.

Table E-1: Testing RD around September 15th with a variety polynomials of bin widths

Sub-sample	Selection	Bandwidth	Poly. order	Coefficient	St. Err.	P-value
Quebec	manual	3.00	1	0.02	0.14	0.89
Quebec	manual	5.00	1	0.01	0.20	0.97
Quebec	manual	7.00	1	-0.07	0.14	0.60
Quebec	manual	9.00	1	-0.09	0.11	0.45
Quebec	mserd	11.68	1	0.00	0.08	0.98
Quebec	manual	5.00	2	0.01	0.58	0.98
Quebec	manual	7.00	2	-0.02	0.26	0.94
Quebec	manual	9.00	2	-0.06	0.19	0.75
Quebec	mserd	14.82	2	-0.01	0.10	0.88
Quebec	manual	7.00	3	0.44	0.62	0.48
Quebec	manual	9.00	3	0.06	0.35	0.86
Quebec	mserd	12.70	3	-0.14	0.15	0.37

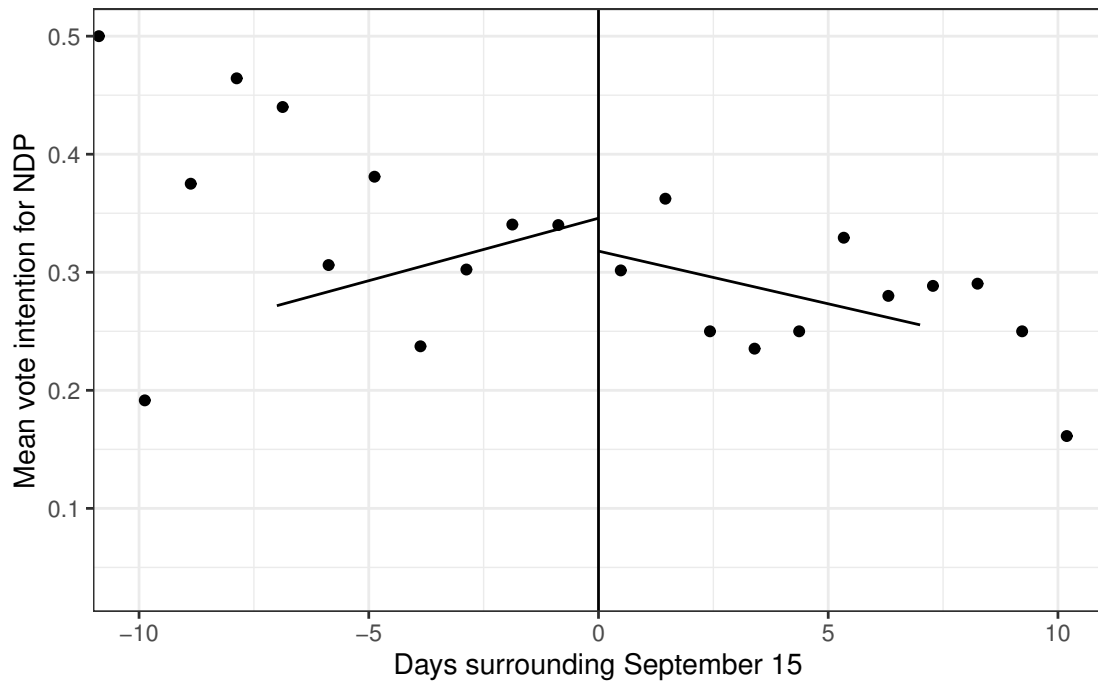


Figure E-1: 7-day Quebec

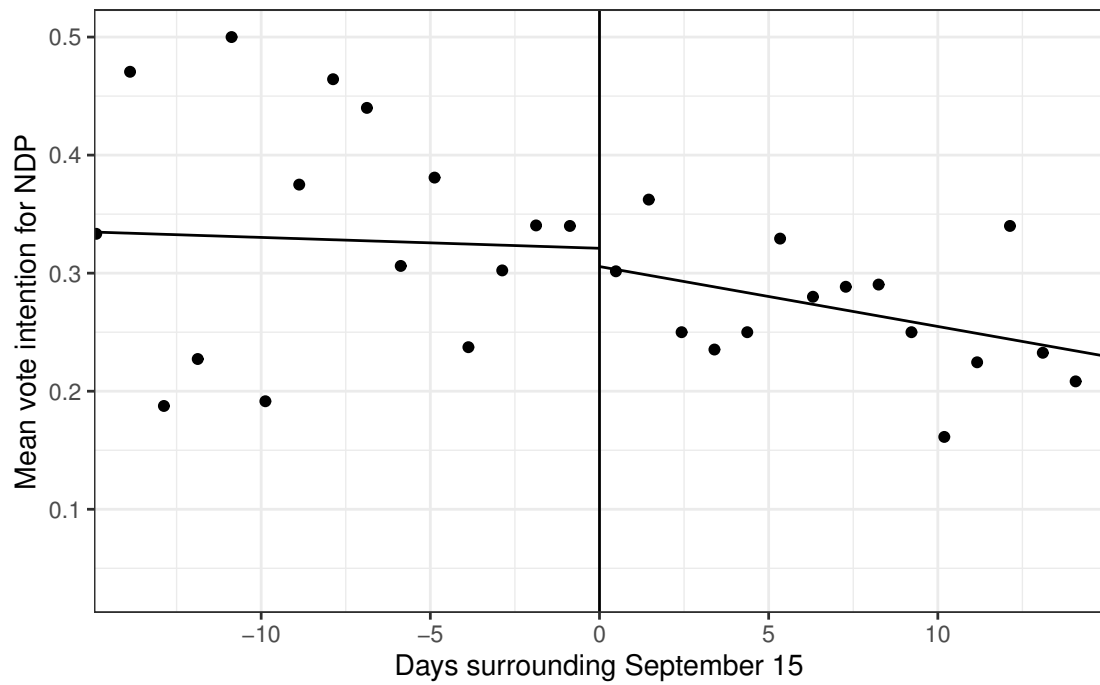


Figure E-2: mserd automatic Quebec

## E.2 DID 7-day window estimation

We test 14-day windows to see if there was a significant and sharp discontinuity at any point during the campaign. We move the treatment period by increments of 3-days and, should there be a discontinuity, we would expect the **Treatment** variable or the **Treatment x Quebec** interaction term to be significant. As is shown in Table E-2 and E-3, not a single period shows significance, with or without controls.

Table E-2: Testing alternative treatment dates with pre and post windows of 7 days (Quebec versus Rest of Canada) and no controls

	2015-09-03	2015-09-06	2015-09-09	2015-09-12	2015-09-15	2015-09-18	2015-09-21	2015-09-24	2015-09-27	2015-09-30	2015-10-03	2015-10-06
Constant	24.39*** (2.87)	25.94*** (2.91)	27.20*** (2.88)	24.27*** (2.51)	22.82*** (2.14)	22.80*** (2.09)	19.62*** (2.05)	20.83*** (2.07)	21.41*** (1.96)	21.84*** (1.86)	21.87*** (1.89)	19.80*** (2.03)
Treatment	0.80 (3.99)	-1.36 (3.75)	-5.75 (3.57)	-2.46 (3.29)	-1.86 (3.01)	-3.05 (2.98)	2.01 (2.83)	0.28 (2.81)	-0.49 (2.80)	-0.90 (2.79)	-2.36 (2.79)	0.15 (2.90)
Quebec	6.47 (4.45)	6.51 (4.39)	7.04 (4.37)	10.23* (4.00)	9.38** (3.42)	10.40** (3.38)	10.53** (3.28)	6.67* (3.40)	3.24 (3.43)	1.83 (3.25)	2.57 (3.35)	6.66 (3.41)
Treatment x Quebec	3.52 (6.13)	2.97 (5.81)	5.43 (5.52)	0.65 (5.30)	0.29 (4.85)	-4.29 (4.80)	-6.73 (4.70)	-4.56 (4.69)	1.08 (4.92)	1.03 (4.61)	1.99 (4.67)	-5.99 (4.72)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	0.00
Num. obs.	882	1018	1152	1197	1354	1344	1398	1385	1313	1418	1385	1280
RMSE	44.96	45.04	44.51	44.10	43.42	42.80	42.17	41.77	41.71	41.66	41.46	40.84

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ . OLS estimations (DID models). Standard errors in parentheses. Dependent variable is vote for the NDP in the 2015 Canadian federal election (binary). The name of the model shows the date around which the 7-day pre- and post-window is centered.

Table E-3: Testing alternative treatment dates with pre and post windows of 7 days (Quebec versus Rest of Canada)

	2015-09-03	2015-09-06	2015-09-09	2015-09-12	2015-09-15	2015-09-18	2015-09-21	2015-09-24	2015-09-27	2015-09-30	2015-10-03	2015-10-06
Constant	19.27 (10.37)	24.91* (10.19)	23.61* (9.59)	11.95 (9.31)	12.83 (8.66)	9.87 (8.70)	7.96 (8.43)	11.41 (8.34)	10.86 (8.76)	13.54 (8.38)	12.53 (8.31)	14.86 (8.71)
Female	-5.17 (3.24)	-5.74 (3.03)	-4.86 (2.78)	-4.17 (2.74)	-3.29 (2.54)	-3.67 (2.52)	-4.69 (2.47)	-2.16 (2.45)	-2.53 (2.53)	-3.71 (2.50)	-2.22 (2.44)	-4.39 (2.58)
Age	-0.16 (0.14)	-0.14 (0.13)	-0.09 (0.12)	-0.12 (0.12)	-0.06 (0.11)	-0.03 (0.11)	0.03 (0.11)	0.07 (0.11)	0.06 (0.11)	-0.06 (0.11)	-0.07 (0.11)	-0.15 (0.12)
French	17.45** (6.30)	10.74 (5.83)	3.17 (5.37)	3.91 (5.11)	4.56 (4.71)	-0.85 (4.67)	-1.30 (4.35)	-0.54 (4.40)	-4.58 (4.47)	-2.22 (4.49)	-0.19 (4.42)	-1.60 (4.81)
Atlantic	-0.89 (6.99)	-0.87 (6.08)	1.58 (5.87)	2.86 (5.63)	-0.37 (5.28)	-1.05 (5.06)	-2.74 (4.90)	-3.05 (4.74)	-2.66 (4.61)	-4.05 (4.73)	-3.68 (4.92)	-2.90 (5.28)
Prairies	5.43 (5.87)	3.16 (5.20)	2.36 (4.45)	0.10 (4.31)	-1.74 (4.08)	0.11 (4.20)	-2.99 (4.13)	-2.41 (4.31)	3.17 (4.31)	2.60 (4.31)	6.42 (4.07)	10.84* (4.28)
British Columbia	7.91 (6.18)	12.19 (6.32)	18.46** (5.85)	14.79** (5.36)	9.90* (4.99)	12.34** (4.69)	7.72 (4.38)	5.05 (4.33)	6.44 (4.32)	6.50 (4.47)	1.03 (4.27)	7.44 (4.51)
Full-time worker	3.38 (4.39)	-3.45 (4.19)	-3.57 (3.84)	-1.70 (3.77)	-0.05 (3.52)	-1.47 (3.43)	1.83 (3.37)	2.83 (3.36)	2.43 (3.46)	3.14 (3.41)	3.68 (3.36)	3.53 (3.48)
Student	2.85 (10.99)	-1.27 (9.99)	-12.05 (8.32)	-11.26 (7.76)	-7.06 (7.49)	-12.92 (7.30)	-1.71 (7.41)	5.42 (7.39)	14.93 (7.90)	18.96* (8.10)	21.81** (7.26)	11.07 (7.24)
Retired	6.94 (5.69)	-2.53 (5.45)	-3.36 (5.04)	-0.09 (4.84)	-2.18 (4.51)	-4.19 (4.43)	-2.61 (4.28)	-2.61 (4.19)	-3.28 (4.40)	1.35 (4.25)	0.77 (4.18)	4.45 (4.37)
High School	-6.72 (7.36)	-2.81 (6.98)	-3.75 (6.80)	4.34 (6.60)	1.11 (6.08)	4.05 (6.14)	0.26 (6.00)	-5.88 (5.84)	-6.57 (6.00)	-4.22 (5.71)	-6.39 (5.67)	-4.77 (5.59)
Bachelor	-2.53 (7.35)	1.63 (6.97)	1.14 (6.81)	8.62 (6.60)	3.46 (6.07)	7.74 (6.14)	2.64 (6.00)	-1.32 (5.87)	-4.44 (6.01)	0.40 (5.73)	-0.38 (5.71)	-1.01 (5.67)
Graduate	-5.00 (8.42)	-0.59 (7.99)	-1.46 (7.85)	3.68 (7.58)	1.14 (7.05)	6.29 (7.12)	3.83 (6.97)	-0.81 (6.77)	-2.85 (6.91)	-5.71 (6.62)	-7.95 (6.58)	-9.83 (6.62)
Vote NDP 2011	50.71*** (3.50)	50.48*** (3.24)	52.87*** (3.00)	51.63*** (2.95)	50.66*** (2.74)	50.64*** (2.74)	50.12*** (2.71)	47.76*** (2.69)	46.55*** (2.75)	43.63*** (2.69)	44.23*** (2.63)	42.08*** (2.75)
Treatment	3.86 (4.27)	-2.04 (4.03)	-5.56 (3.72)	-0.09 (3.49)	-0.16 (3.23)	-2.54 (3.22)	-0.16 (3.10)	-4.78 (3.08)	-3.43 (3.07)	-1.57 (3.16)	-0.28 (3.08)	2.45 (3.29)
Quebec	-5.63 (7.39)	-2.54 (7.08)	2.94 (6.65)	5.77 (6.13)	4.98 (5.63)	8.61 (5.66)	5.48 (5.21)	-2.36 (5.25)	6.70 (5.29)	6.06 (5.27)	4.69 (5.29)	8.51 (5.69)
Treatment:Quebec	-2.31 (6.52)	1.53 (6.20)	5.80 (5.77)	0.34 (5.59)	-6.07 (5.16)	-6.58 (5.10)	-3.05 (5.04)	7.25 (5.00)	1.52 (5.25)	-3.06 (5.08)	-4.44 (5.00)	-10.26* (5.20)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.29	0.29	0.32	0.31	0.30	0.31	0.30	0.28	0.27	0.25	0.27	0.25
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.27	0.27	0.30	0.30	0.28	0.29	0.28	0.26	0.26	0.23	0.26	0.23
Num. obs.	621	714	799	825	934	913	933	939	865	930	911	844
RMSE	39.75	39.92	38.65	38.46	38.15	37.40	36.98	36.94	36.48	37.21	36.11	36.66

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ . OLS estimations (DID models). Standard errors in parentheses. Dependent variable is vote for the NDP in the 2015 Canadian federal election (binary). The name of the model shows the date around which the 7-day pre- and post-window is centered.

## F Robustness checks

### F.1 Sensitivity analysis

As we use observational data, unobserved confounders are a concern. We evaluate how sensitive to unobserved confounders our DID results are using the R `konfound` package (Rosenberg et al. 2019). For Model 1 in Table 1, we find that an omitted variable would need to be correlated at 28% with both the outcome and the interaction term, while controlling for other covariates. Moreover, 71% of the estimate would have to be due to bias to invalidate the inference. These findings increase the confidence in the estimation.

### F.2 Logistic regression

Despite the limitations of using logistic regression in a DID setting (Lechner 2011), we also show these estimations in Table F-1. All results remain significant in the expected direction and confirm what we see in Table 1.

Table F-1: The effects of the niqab ruling on vote intention for the NDP

	1: Binary DID	2: Linear Trend	3: 7-day media
Constant	-1.78 (0.30) <sup>***</sup>	-1.80 (0.30) <sup>***</sup>	-1.81 (0.30) <sup>***</sup>
Quebec	2.54 (0.09) <sup>***</sup>	2.54 (0.09) <sup>***</sup>	2.53 (0.09) <sup>***</sup>
Voted NDP 2011	-0.20 (0.12)	-0.20 (0.18)	
Ruling	0.51 (0.20) <sup>**</sup>	0.48 (0.20) <sup>*</sup>	0.47 (0.19) <sup>*</sup>
Trend		-0.00 (0.01)	
7-day niqab			-0.02 (0.02)
DID effects			
Ruling x Quebec	-0.66 (0.18) <sup>***</sup>	0.11 (0.29)	
Trend x Quebec		-0.04 (0.01) <sup>***</sup>	
7-day niqab x Quebec			-0.04 (0.02) <sup>*</sup>
AIC	3399.27	3383.84	3397.29
BIC	3505.34	3502.40	3503.37
Log Likelihood	-1682.63	-1672.92	-1681.64
Deviance	3365.27	3345.84	3363.29
Num. obs.	3789	3789	3789

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> $p < 0.001$ , <sup>\*\*</sup> $p < 0.01$ , <sup>\*</sup> $p < 0.05$ . Logistic models for DID estimations with robust standard errors for Models 1 and 2 and clustered standard errors at the day level for Model 3 in parentheses. Dependent variable is vote intention for the NDP (binary variable). All models use full CES web sample.

### F.3 Alternative samples

We test the robustness of our results by employing the full CES sample, which combines the web and phone samples. In the estimations that combine the web and phone samples, we employ a binary variable which registers the mode of the survey (web = 1).

Table F-2: The effects of the niqab ruling on vote intention for the NDP

	1: Binary DID	2: Linear Trend	3: 7-day media
Constant	9.84 (3.35)**	9.76 (3.35)**	8.61 (3.29)**
Web	3.70 (0.99)***	3.60 (0.99)***	4.08 (0.98)***
Voted NDP 2011	46.21 (1.23)***	46.12 (1.23)***	46.12 (1.00)***
Ruling	-2.90 (1.18)*	-2.49 (1.60)	
Quebec	8.25 (2.40)***	8.03 (2.40)***	7.74 (2.10)***
Trend		-0.03 (0.06)	
7-day niqab			-0.27 (0.14)
DID effects			
Ruling x Quebec	-9.68 (2.19)***	-1.10 (3.27)	
Trend x Quebec		-0.47 (0.13)***	
7-day niqab x Quebec			-0.63 (0.18)***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.27	0.28	0.27
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.27	0.27	0.27
Num. obs.	6621	6621	6621
RMSE	35.92	35.87	35.92

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ . Linear probability models for DID estimations with robust standard errors for Models 1 and 2 and clustered standard errors at the day level for Model 3 in parentheses. Dependent variable is vote intention for the NDP (binary variable). All models use full CES web sample.

## F.4 Local Parliament Project data

Another major academic survey was run during the 2015 Canadian federal election. The Local Parliament Project (<https://www.localparliament.ca/>) surveyed approximately 37,000 Canadians seeking to get representative samples (more information on the survey can be found here: <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/DACHKP>).

Table F-3 matches Table 1. Here the results are directionally similar but are smaller in effect size. We note that the LPP survey began on August 26, 2015 and thus the CES contains two weeks of pre-treatment observations that the LPP is missing.

Table F-3: The effects of the niqab ruling on vote intention for the NDP

	1: Binary DID	2: Linear Trend	3: 7-day media
Constant	16.78 (1.79) <sup>***</sup>	16.70 (1.79) <sup>***</sup>	16.81 (1.83) <sup>***</sup>
Voted NDP 2011	41.56 (0.70) <sup>***</sup>	41.61 (0.70) <sup>***</sup>	41.57 (0.55) <sup>***</sup>
Ruling	-2.65 (0.57) <sup>***</sup>	-1.06 (0.91)	
Quebec	6.35 (1.14) <sup>***</sup>	6.24 (1.14) <sup>***</sup>	5.68 (0.99) <sup>***</sup>
Trend		-0.08 (0.03) <sup>*</sup>	
7-day niqab			-0.39 (0.07) <sup>***</sup>
DID effects			
Ruling x Quebec	-7.23 (1.17) <sup>***</sup>	-3.07 (1.80)	
Trend x Quebec		-0.20 (0.07) <sup>**</sup>	
7-day niqab x Quebec			-0.31 (0.09) <sup>***</sup>
R <sup>2</sup>	0.21	0.21	0.21
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.21	0.21	0.21
Num. obs.	24687	24687	24687
RMSE	36.40	36.38	36.39

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> $p < 0.001$ , <sup>\*\*</sup> $p < 0.01$ , <sup>\*</sup> $p < 0.05$ . Linear probability models for DID estimations with robust standard errors for Models 1 and 2 and clustered standard errors at the day level for Model 3 in parentheses. Dependent variable is vote intention for the NDP (binary variable). All models use full LPP sample.



## F.5 Quebec effect heterogeneity

We further test whether the effect of the court ruling on vote is moderated by variables such as media exposure, political knowledge, and exposure to news related to the niqab over the past week. Here we look at the Quebec post-ruling sample only and would expect that those who paid more attention to the issue, were more knowledgeable, or have heard more about the niqab over the past week would be less likely to indicate vote intention for the NDP. Table F-4 displays the results that build on the estimation strategy shown in Table 1.

Table F-4: The effects of the niqab ruling on vote intention for the NDP, moderated by various measures of exposure to the niqab story

	1: Media Exposure	2: Political knowledge	3: Immigration-news
Constant	24.01* (12.04)	12.74 (8.08)	15.50 (9.67)
Voted NDP 2011	42.34*** (2.96)	43.48*** (2.34)	41.88*** (3.18)
Ruling	-19.18** (7.29)	-6.96 (4.76)	
Media exposure	1.03 (1.91)		
Ruling: Media exposure	0.57 (2.39)		
Knowledge		3.10 (1.61)	
Ruling x Knowledge		-3.00 (2.06)	
Heard about immigration in past week			-10.57*** (2.82)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.24	0.24	0.22
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.23	0.24	0.21
Num. obs.	924	1504	878
RMSE	41.43	40.61	40.98

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ . Linear probability models for DID estimations with standard errors in parentheses. Dependent variable is vote intention for the NDP in the 2015 Canadian federal election (binary). All models use full CES Quebec sample.

Exposure is a post-election measure from 0 to 5 of amount of self-reported time spent consuming news each day (“On average, how long each day do you usually spend watching, reading, and listening to news, in total?”). The knowledge measure is the sum of correct responses to four knowledge questions: Premier, Finance Minister, Government General, President of Russia.

We also employ an indirect measure of exposure to information about the niqab. Re-

spondents were asked about exposure to a range of issues, including immigration. Of course, immigration and the niqab court ruling are not the same issue but as the questionnaire did not include a specific question about the niqab, we proxy this with immigration-related news content which respondents may interpret as including everything related to the ruling. The data appear to show a clear increase in the percentage of respondents indicating they had heard a lot about immigration in the pre- and post-ruling periods (0.27 vs 0.60, Welch t-test p-value  $\lll 0.001$ ). If we replace the court ruling measure by an exposure to immigration debate measure, then we find a large substantive and highly significant effect. This provides some corroboratory evidence that it was exposure to immigration-related stories that drove Quebec voters away from the NDP.

As can be observed in Table F-4, the first two variables do not moderate the impact of the ruling on the vote intention for NDP. The measure of exposure to immigration-related news does have a strong negative effect but this exposure is strongly correlated with the post-ruling period.

Descriptive statistics for each of these measures is found in Table F-5.

Table F-5: Descriptive statistics for exposure measures

Variable	n	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max
1: Post-Election Media Exposure	1273	2.89	1.24	3.00	0	5
2: Knowledge battery	2288	2.04	0.98	2.00	0	4
3: Exposure to immigration related news	1353	0.43	0.49	0.00	0	1

# G Media text analysis

## G.1 Visualizations of media tone and mentions

For the analysis of the mentions and media tone, we searched the following terms in French.

- For the NDP, we search for: Mulcair, NDP, Nouveau Parti Démocratique, NPD, néodémocrate, and néo-démocrate.
- For the LPC, we search for: Trudeau, Liberal, libéral, PLC, and LPC.

Figure G-1 shows the moving average of per-article mentions in Quebec media for NDP and Liberal-associated terms. Throughout the campaign, but especially in the critical period after the court ruling, the NDP is far more likely to be mentioned in stories on the niqab.

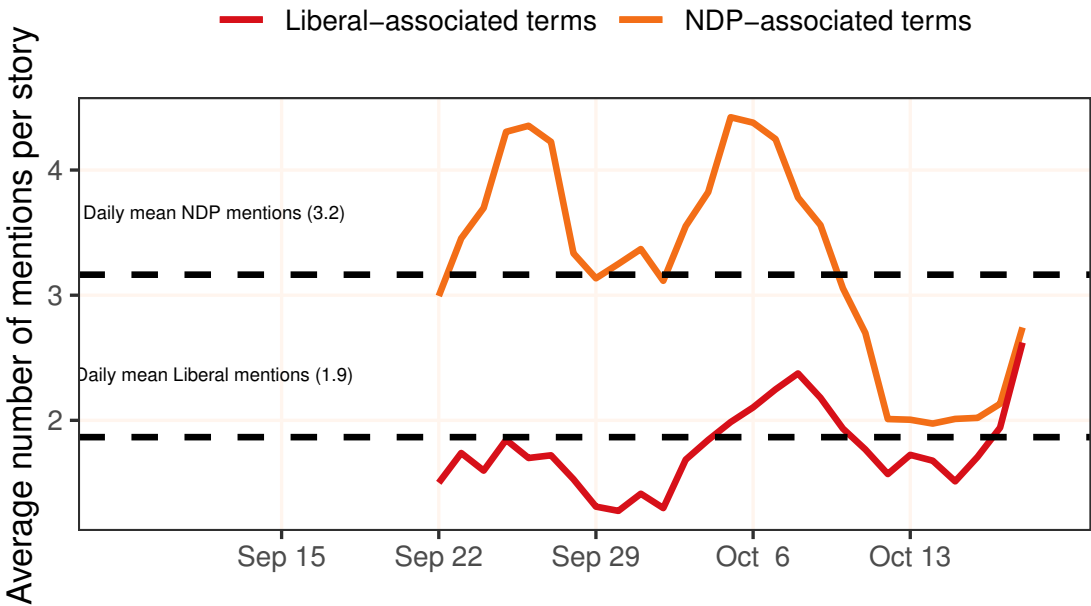


Figure G-1: Moving average (n = 7) number of mentions of NDP and LPC-associated terms in Quebec media over the campaign period

Figure G-2 shows the moving average of per-term sentiment in Quebec media for NDP and Liberal-associated terms. Throughout the campaign, the overall sentiment directed towards the NDP in stories on the niqab is substantively more negative.

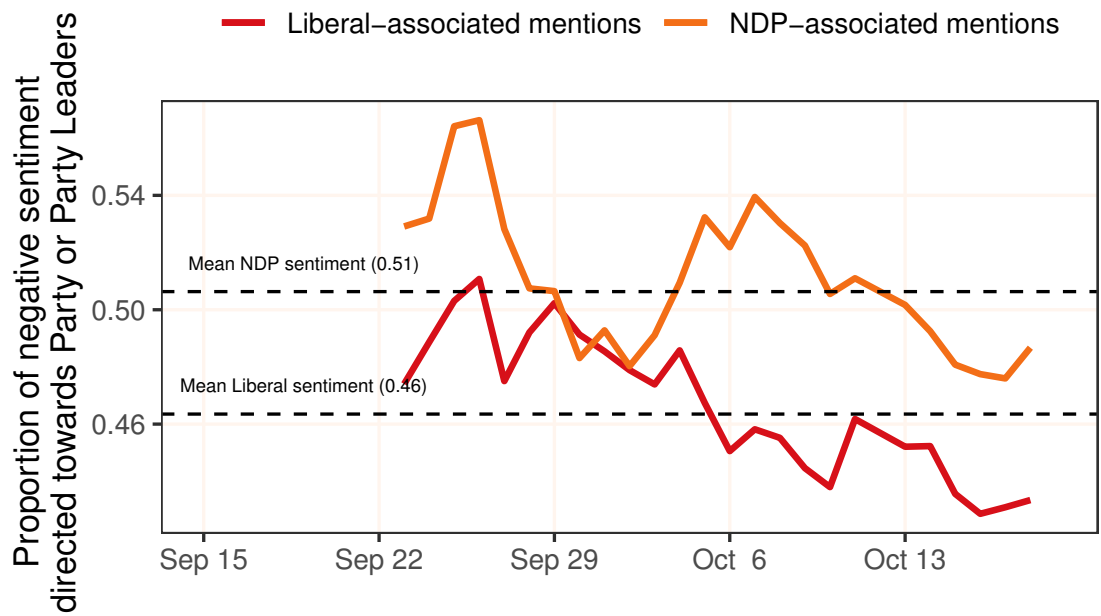


Figure G-2: Moving average (n = 7) of negative sentiment directed towards NDP and Mulcair versus Liberals and Trudeau in Quebec media over the campaign period

## G.2 Illustrative passages from media analysis

Here are five passages which generally illustrate the media tone towards the NDP on the niqab issue. We present both the original French version of the passages and the English translation performed by the authors.

The first passage below is from an article two weeks after the court ruling covering a northern visit by Mulcair where he gave a press conference on an entirely unrelated issue: the price of orange juice and other challenges facing a northern food assistance program.

*...but there was a veil cast over Thomas Mulcair's message throughout [his] 24-hour visit to Nunavut. The issue of the niqab, to be more precise, followed the NDP campaign to Iqaluit...as opposed to Justin Trudeau, who is banking on an infrastructure program and on non-taxable direct financial assistance to young families, and Stephen Harper, who is delivering a simple message...* (La Presse, October 1, 2019: Comme une voile sur cette campagne)

*...mais il y avait comme un voile cachant en partie le message de Thomas Mulcair tout le long de cette visite de 24 heures au Nunavut. Comme un niqab, pour être plus précis, qui a collé sur la campagne néo-démocrate à Iqaluit...Contre Justin Trudeau, qui mise sur un programme d'infrastructures et sur une aide financière directe non imposable aux jeunes familles, et contre Stephen Harper, le maître du message simple.* (La Presse, October 1, 2019: Comme une voile sur cette campagne)

The second article dates to four days after the court ruling and provides an example of how the NDP fumbled and how Mulcair and the NDP quickly became attacked on the issue.

*The Conservatives and Bloc Québécois have benefited from the recent court ruling on the wearing of the niqab to help them attack their opponents. Stephen Harper's party has announced another judicial appeal and accused Thomas Mulcair and Justin Trudeau of going against the opinions of Canadians. Meanwhile, the Bloc Québécois have launched a campaign ad targeting the NDP on the issue. Thomas Mulcair, for his part, has not been entirely clear on his position and avoided the question of whether he will withdraw the appeal, as the Liberals have promised. "We will respect the decision of the court", he replied while noting that "the courts are there for protecting the rights of religious freedom".* (Le Devoir, September 19, 2015: Le niqab devient une arme électorale)

*Conservateurs et bloquistes ont profité du jugement récent des tribunaux sur le port du niqab pour taper sur leurs adversaires. Les troupes de Stephen Harper ont annoncé un nouveau recours judiciaire, tout en accusant Thomas Mulcair et Justin Trudeau d'aller à l'encontre de la volonté des Canadiens sur cette question. Les troupes de Gilles Duceppe, de leur côté, ont lancé une nouvelle publicité pour s'en prendre à la position du NPD...Division au NPD Thomas Mulcair, de son côté, s'est fait discret sur*

*la question, évitant de préciser s'il retirerait, comme les libéraux, l'appel du fédéral. "Nous allons respecter les tribunaux", a-t-il répondu, en notant que... "les tribunaux sont là pour garantir la liberté de religion". (Le Devoir, September 19, 2015: Le niqab devient une arme électorale)*

A third article comes from six days after the court decision, where the story focuses on Mulcair and the niqab is brought up several times and internal divisions in the NDP approach are highlighted.

*The leader of the NDP did not condemn the statements of the members of his party who compared the campaign advertisement of the Bloc Québécois (on the NDP position on the niqab) to those of the Front National. "People need to understand that the law already requires that people show their face when they become citizens. The real focus of this campaign are the politics of fear and division of Stephen Harper". Thomas was visiting Newfoundland all day. (La Tribune, September 21, 2015: Les faits sont connus, dit Mulcair)*

*Le chef du NPD a cependant évité de condamner les déclarations de son propre personnel, qui comparait une publicité du Bloc québécois au Front national. « Les gens doivent comprendre que la loi exige qu'une femme qui porte le niqab se dévoile avant de pouvoir devenir citoyenne. Le vrai sujet de la campagne, ce sont les politiques de peur et de division de Stephen Harper. » Thomas Mulcair était en visite à Terre-Neuve toute la journée. (La Tribune, September 21, 2015: Les faits sont connus, dit Mulcair)*

Fourth is an article from several days later and shows the strong connections being made between between the NDP and the Niqab; the report talks at length about Mulcair's position and only briefly mentions Trudeau.

*Thomas Mulcair had been silent about the issue of the niqab for a week, but he was adamant on Tuesday: he opposes the ban on wearing a full veil at citizenship ceremonies...This position seems to be damaging his support in Montreal, where some of his election posters have been vandalized...Would Mulcair support a Conservative law? "No more than I would vote for a law that would take away the freedom of press", replied the leader of the NDP to the journalist who asked him the question. (Le Devoir, September 23, 2015: Le niqab, source de discorde)*

*Thomas Mulcair s'était fait discret sur la question du niqab depuis une semaine, mais il a été catégorique mardi: il s'oppose à l'interdiction du voile intégral aux cérémonies de citoyenneté et rejeterait un projet de loi en ce sens. Une position qui semble déranger à Montréal, où certaines de ses pancartes électorales ont été vandalisées...M. Mulcair appuiera-t-il une loi conservatrice ? "Pas plus que je voterais en faveur d'une loi qui vous enlèverait la liberté de presse, voyons donc", a lancé le chef du NPD à la journaliste qui venait de lui poser la question. (Le Devoir, September 23, 2015: Le niqab, source de discorde)*

Finally, an article published in the Journal de Montréal the day before the election which lamented how the niqab had been focused on the whole campaign and then suddenly dropped the last week.

*The whole campaign we have discussed the woman in the niqab. The woman in the niqab over there, the woman in the niqab over here. Hundreds of people went and voted with their faces covered because of the woman in the niqab. The campaign of Tom Mulcair was derailed because of the woman in the niqab. The story of the woman in the niqab was told around the world and, in the debates, the most passionate moments were those that concerned the woman in the niqab. (Le Journal de Montréal, October 18, 2015: La femme au niqab)*

*Tout le long de la campagne, on a parlé de la femme au niqab. La femme au niqab par-ci, la femme au niqab par-là. Des centaines de personnes sont allées voter masquées à cause de la femme au niqab. La campagne de Tom Mulcair a dérapé à cause de la femme au niqab. L'histoire de la femme au niqab a fait le tour du monde et, dans les débats, les moments les plus enflammés et les plus passionnés concernaient la femme au niqab. (Le Journal de Montréal, October 18, 2015: La femme au niqab)*

## H Alternative modeling strategies

### H.1 The natural experiment modelling strategy

Table H-1 shows the alternative modelling strategy based on a natural experiment framework as employed in Balcells and Torrats-Espinosa (2018), with and without controls. This specification on our data yields an overall 7% effect, with it being almost entirely driven by Quebec respondents who express an 10% decrease in vote intention for the NDP. Note that Model 4 is identical to Model 1 appearing in Table 1, however the logic is different. In the main body we use a DID logic whereas here we model heterogeneous effects of the exogenous shock on Quebec versus the rest of Canada.

Table H-1: The effects of the niqab ruling on vote intention for the NDP

	1: Overall	2: Overall	3: Quebec	4: Quebec
Constant	27.81 (0.86)***	18.52 (4.15)***	24.18 (1.11)***	15.45 (4.21)***
Quebec			9.19 (1.76)***	8.32 (2.80)**
Ruling	-5.86 (1.15)***	-6.90 (1.24)***	-2.82 (1.47)	-2.69 (1.59)
Ruling x Quebec			-7.58 (2.37)**	-10.62 (2.52)***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.00	0.28	0.01	0.28
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.00	0.28	0.01	0.28
Num. obs.	5624	3789	5624	3789
RMSE	42.93	37.76	42.83	37.68

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ . Linear probability models based on a natural experiment setup with dependent variable as vote intention for the NDP in the 2015 Canadian federal election (binary). All models use full CES web sample.

### H.2 Natural experiment modelling strategy - panel data

An alternative way to approximate the result shown in Model 1 in Table 1 is to compare vote intention in the pre-election sample with reported vote in the post-election survey where the same respondents were re-interviewed. Comparing those in Quebec who initially replied to the pre-survey before September 15th to those who replied after September 15th indicates a similar 14.1 percentage point difference in reported vote for the NDP. For those who were interviewed before September 15th, 37.8% indicated that they intended to vote for NDP whereas only 20.3% then later reported that they did. In the rest of Canada, this same comparison shows a difference of only 4.1 percentage points.

Another way to look at this is shown in Figure H-1, which captures difference-in-means comparisons across respondents who replied to both the pre- and post-election survey.



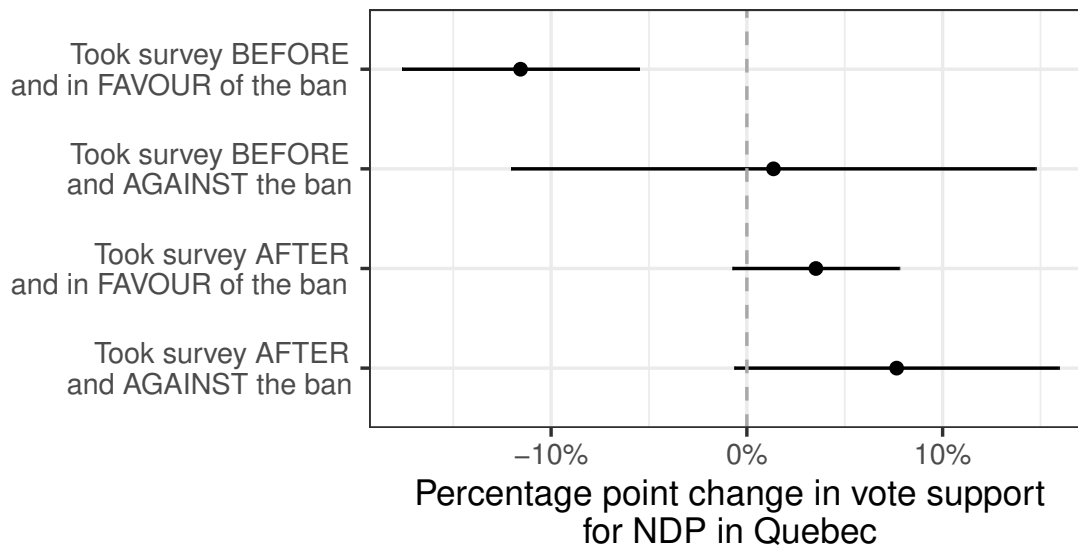


Figure H-1: Within-subject comparisons for vote intention and reported vote for the NDP across in Quebec decided voters

We observe only one group for which there is a notable difference between intended and reported vote: the top line shows that those who replied to the survey before the issue was primed by the September 15th court ruling and subsequent media attention and were in favour of a niqab ban were much less likely to actually vote NDP. Other comparisons (those who took survey before the ruling and were against the niqab ban; those who took the survey after the ruling and were in favour of the niqab ban; and, finally, those who took the survey after the ruling were against the niqab ban) indicate no statistically significant percentage point change in vote support for NDP in Quebec (the last three lines of Figure H-1).

A similar comparison looking at partisanship (Figure H-2) provides additional evidence of partisan switching.

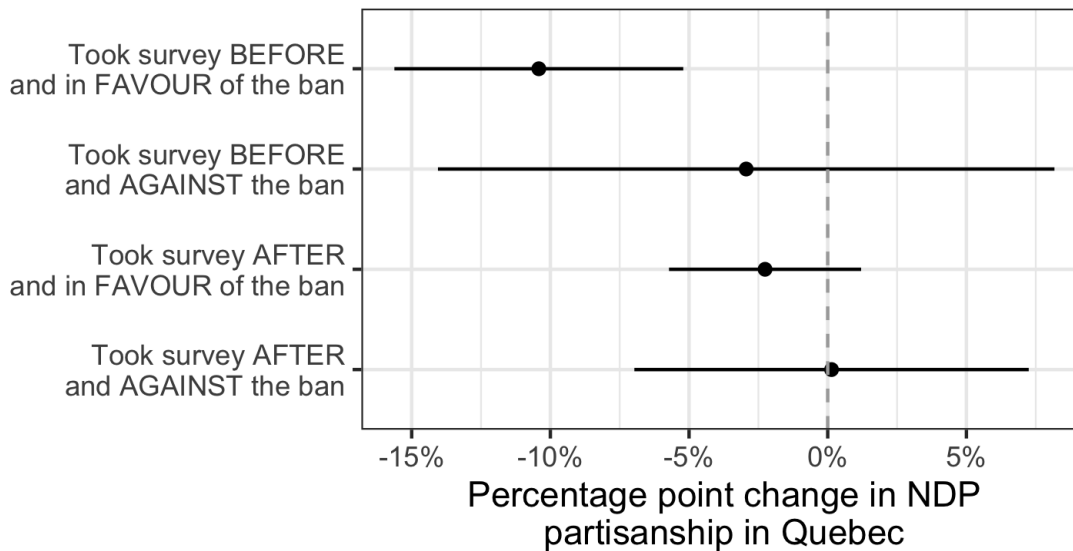


Figure H-2: Within-subject comparisons for NDP partisanship for the NDP in Quebec sample

### H.3 NDP 2011 Voters

To better understand the results, we run all the models found in Table 1 but instead investigate only the Quebec sub-sample. As noted above, many Quebec voters cast a ballot for the NDP for the first time in 2011 and their loyalty to the party may have been influenced in particular by the niqab ruling. Alternatively, the party may have been able to persuade their supporters of their issue position (Tesler 2015).

Table H-2 shows the results. Here, the DID control and treatment groups are those who voted for the NDP in 2011 and those who did not. The effects shown are strikingly similar as the Rest of Canada-Quebec comparison, with no sharp discontinuity but effects for both linear trend and media coverage measures particularly in this group. The effect is very strong, with a daily erosion of support by approximately one point each day after the niqab court ruling among Quebecers who voted NDP in 2011. The court ruling occurred thirty-four days before the election which, in substantive terms means that a 2011 NDP supporter was ~49 percentage points more likely to vote for the NDP than other Quebecers on September 14th but only ~15 percentage points more likely by the date of the election on October 19th.

The exogenous shock seemed to have an important impact on those Quebecers who supported NDP in the previous election. This is consistent with an interesting evolution we

observe in the data: the percentage of those reporting NDP party identification is always smaller than the percentage of those expressing a vote intention for the same party (for the comparative evolution of party identification and vote intention for the three major parties across the campaign, see Appendix A). A weak and volatile identification with the NDP may have made this party's potential voters more receptive to information effects and campaign priming.

Table H-2: The effects of the niqab ruling on vote intention for the NDP

	1: Binary DID	2: Linear Trend	3: 7-day media
Constant	16.78 (7.44)*	15.27 (7.42)*	15.29 (7.57)*
Voted NDP 2011	49.21 (3.47)***	49.09 (3.47)***	48.72 (2.97)***
Ruling	-9.15 (2.37)***	-4.14 (3.72)	
Trend		-0.28 (0.14)	
7-day niqab			-0.66 (0.20)***
DID effects			
Ruling x Voted NDP 2011	-10.65 (4.64)*	6.17 (7.41)	
Trend x Voted NDP 2011		-0.97 (0.32)**	
7-day niqab x Voted NDP 2011			-0.83 (0.31)**
R <sup>2</sup>	0.24	0.26	0.25
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.24	0.25	0.24
Num. obs.	1504	1504	1504
RMSE	40.56	40.22	40.52

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ . Linear probability models for DID estimations with robust standard errors for Models 1 and 2 and clustered standard errors for Model 3 in parentheses. Dependent variable is vote intention for the NDP (binary variable). All models use full CES web sample.

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