

# Immigrants, Citizenship & Democracy

## Evidence from Canada

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# How is newcomers' citizenship expressed?

## Key Questions

- Participation in host society's political affairs
  - Are immigrants active and psychologically engaged in the politics of the host country?
- Support for regime norms and principles
  - Do immigrants support democracy?
  - Are immigrants supportive of core democratic norms?
- Belonging and support for the political community:
  - How do immigrants feel about the host society?
  - Do they feel like they belong?
  - Do they identify with the political community?

# How is newcomers' citizenship expressed?

## Evidence from Canada

- Answers to these questions have tended to emphasize sociodemographic and contextual (source country and host country) factors
- Investigations of the attitudinal determinants of participation and engagement, and support for the regime and political community are less common
- It turns out that immigrant-specific attitudes can have powerful effects on political participation and support in the host country

Do immigrants express support for  
democracy and its underlying  
principles?

# Support for Democracy

## Support for democracy: Evidence from Canada

Table 1. Support for democracy (immigrants and Canadian-born population).

	Canadian-born population	Immigrants from countries		
		Democratic	Partly democratic	Non-democratic
Having a democratic political system (% good or very good thing)	88 (3138)	93 (352)	96* (547)	97* (645)
Democracy is better than any other government (% strongly agree or agree) <sup>a</sup>	86 (1475)	87 (163)	89 (278)	91 (275)
Importance of living in a democracy <sup>b</sup> (mean score 1–10 scale)	9.0 (1740)	9.3* (191)	9.0 (275)	8.9 (374)

Source: 2000/2006 WVS/NIS (numbers in parentheses indicate sample size).

Notes: \*Difference with Canadian-born population is significant at 0.01-level (*t*-test); <sup>a</sup>Question asked only in the 2000 WVS/NIS; <sup>b</sup>Question asked only in the 2006 WVS/NIS.

# Support for Alternatives to Democracy

## Support for Alternatives to Democracy: Evidence from Canada

Table 3. Support for alternatives to democracy (immigrants and Canadian-born population).

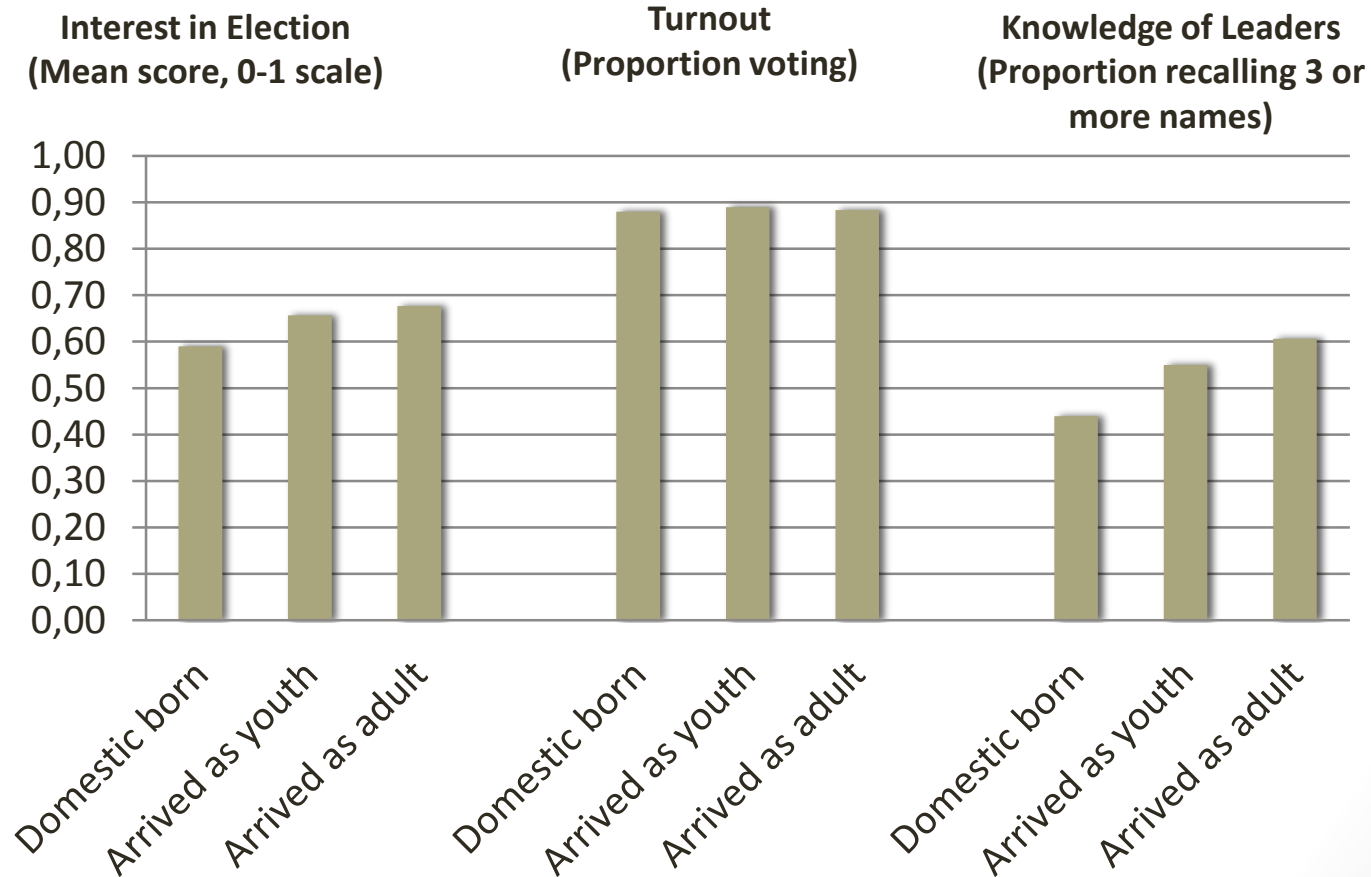
	Canadian-born population	Immigrants from countries		
		Democratic	Partly democratic	Non-democratic
Having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country (% very good or good)	43 (3209)	42 (352)	58* (538)	58* (629)
A strong leader who does not have to bother with elections and parliament (% very good or good)	23 (3233)	20 (353)	37* (539)	32* (633)
The army run the country (% very good or good)	7 (3266)	6 (357)	13* (548)	14* (638)

Sources: 2000 and 2006 WVS/NIS Canada (numbers in parentheses indicate sample size).

Notes: \*Difference with Canadian-born population is significant at 0.01-level (*t*-test).

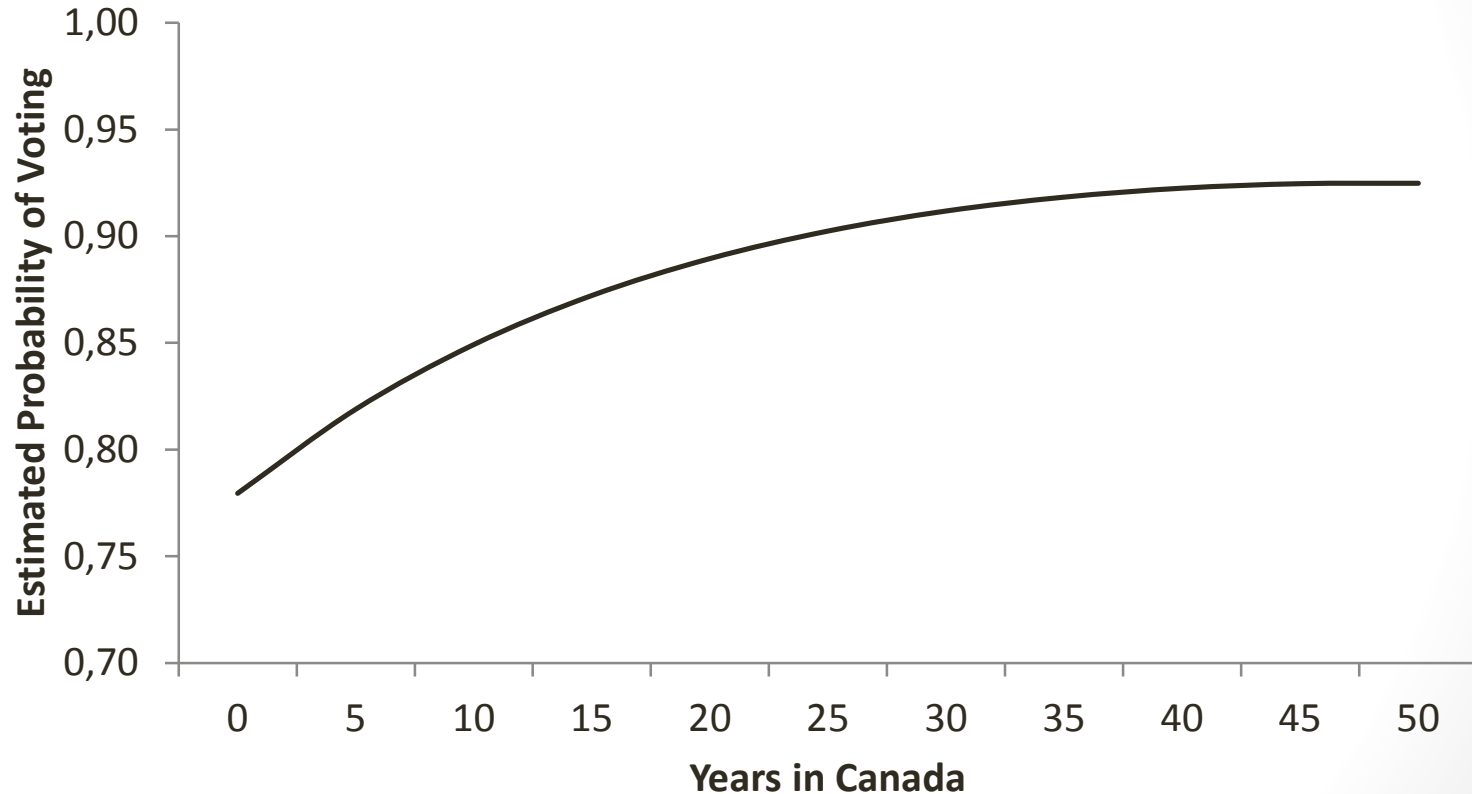
Do immigrants participate in the political life of the host society?

# Immigrant Electoral Engagement in Canada



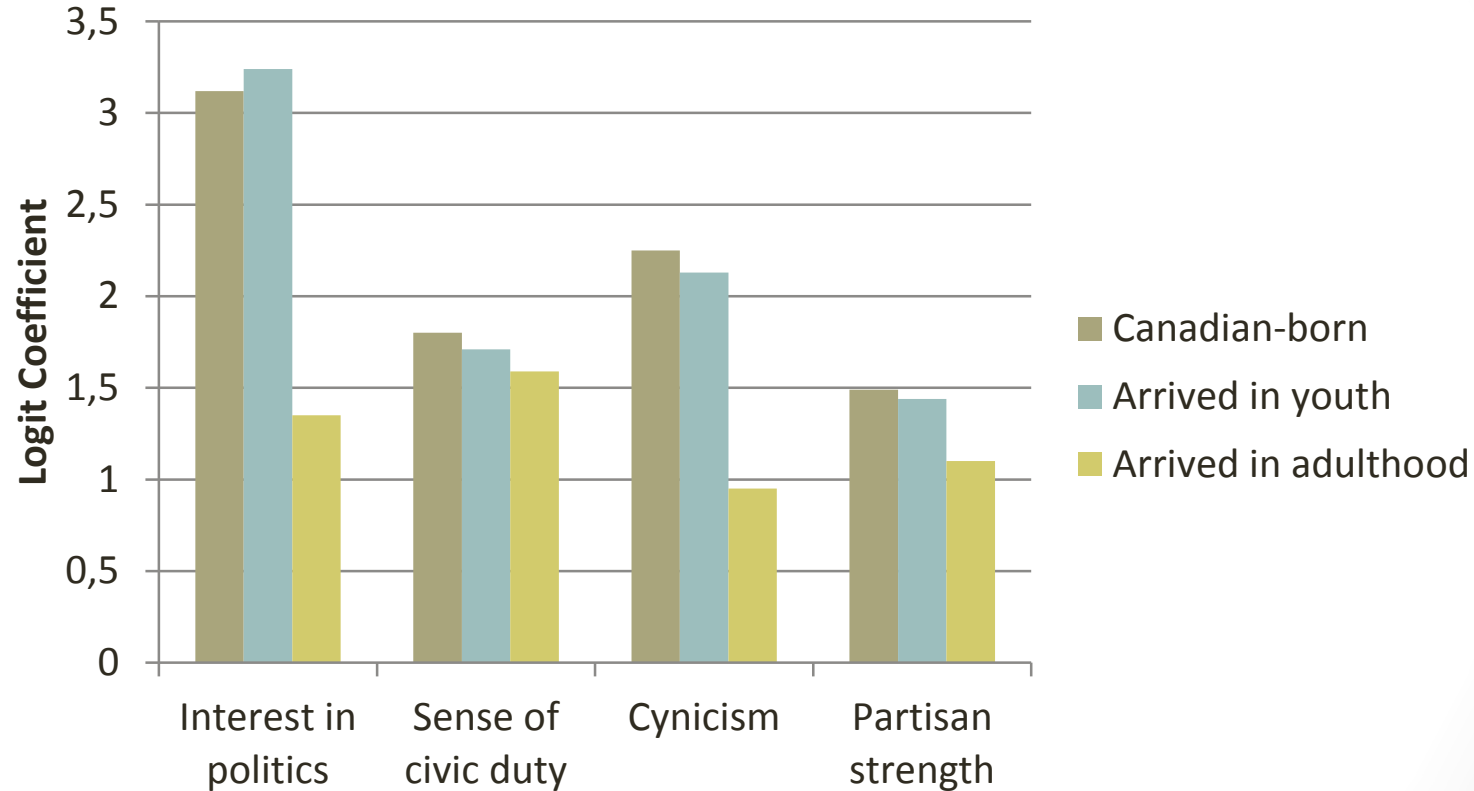


# Federal Election Turnout by Length of Residence



Source: Canadian Election Studies, 1968-2008

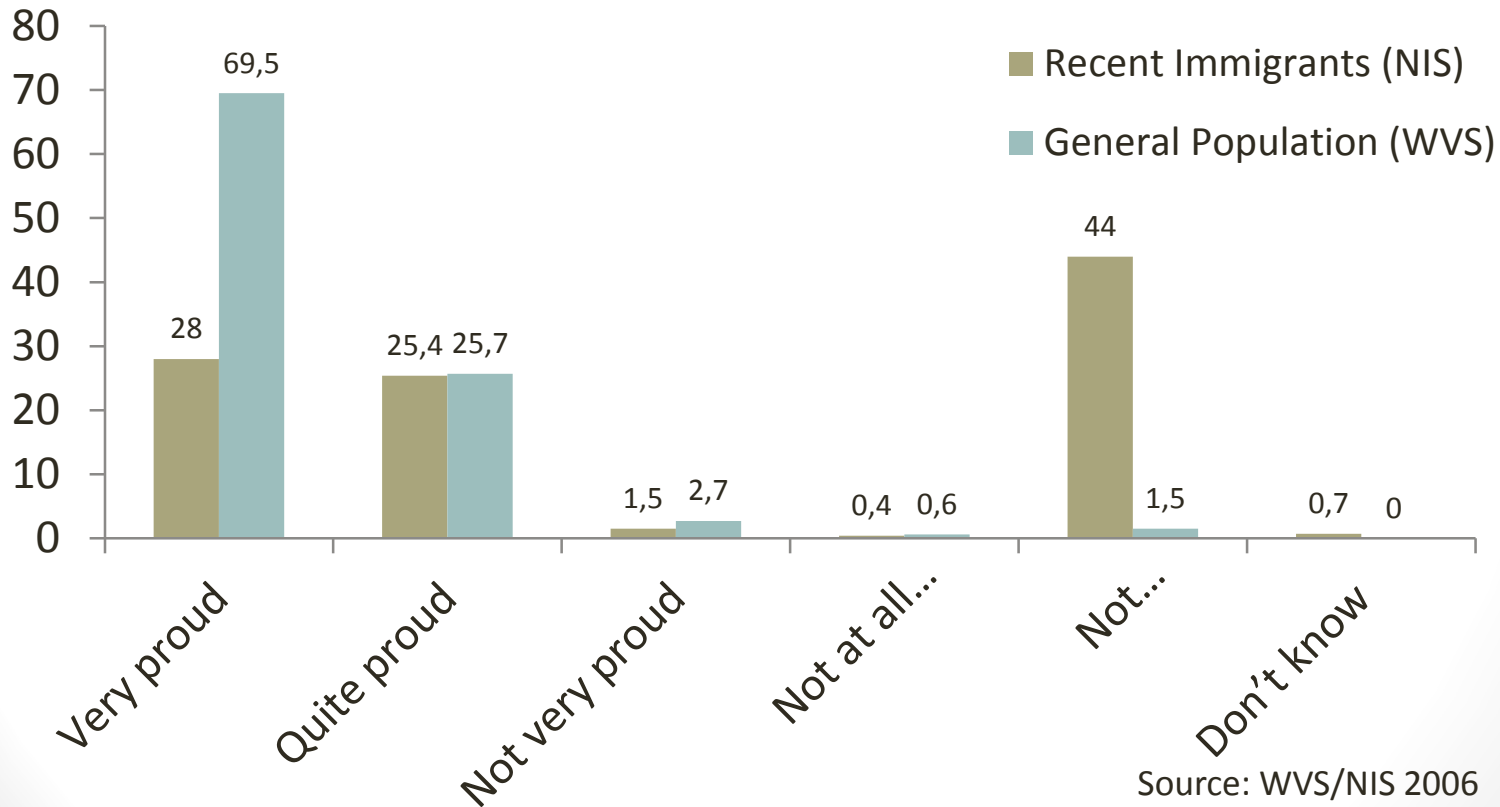
# Impact of Political Predispositions on Turnout



Do immigrants identify with /  
express support for the host political  
community?

# National Pride among Recent Immigrants

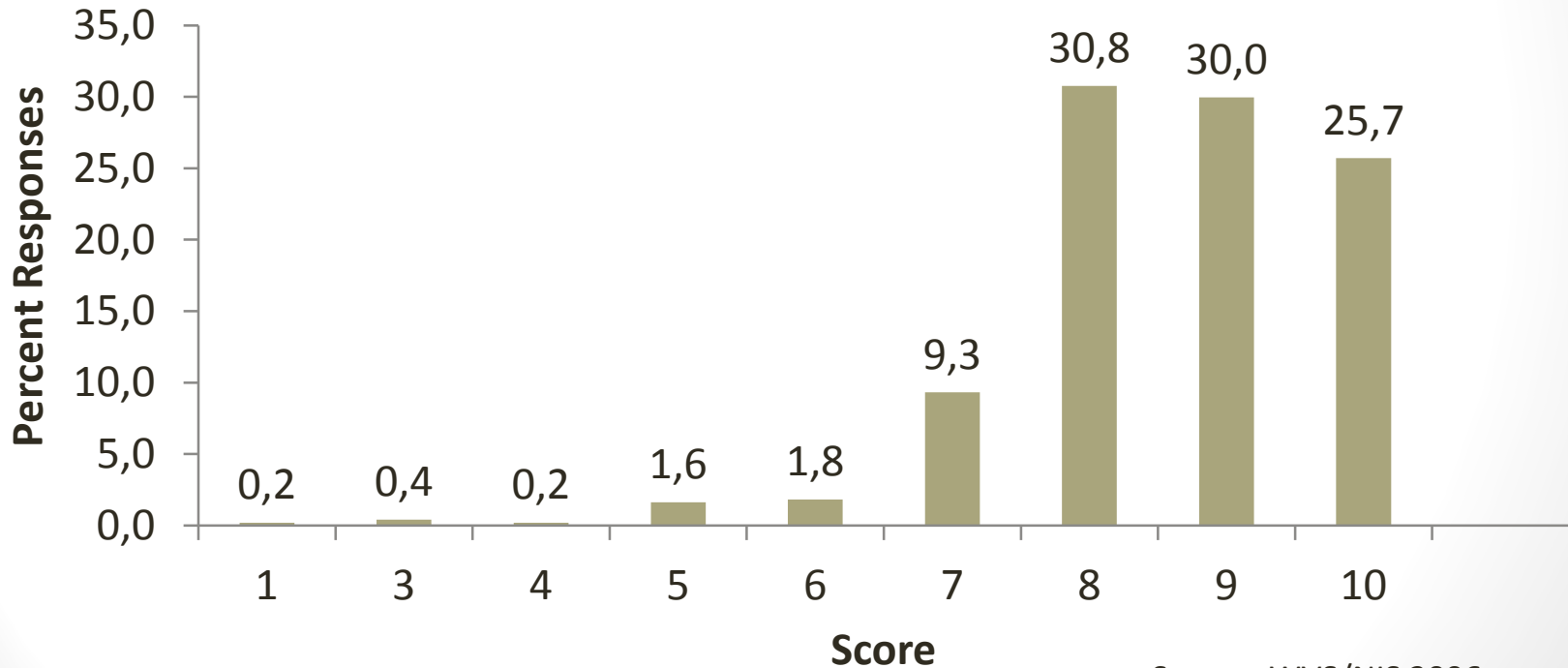
## How proud are you to be Canadian?



Source: WVS/NIS 2006

# Support for the Host Community

## Feelings Toward Canada (immigrants in Canada for up to 10 years)

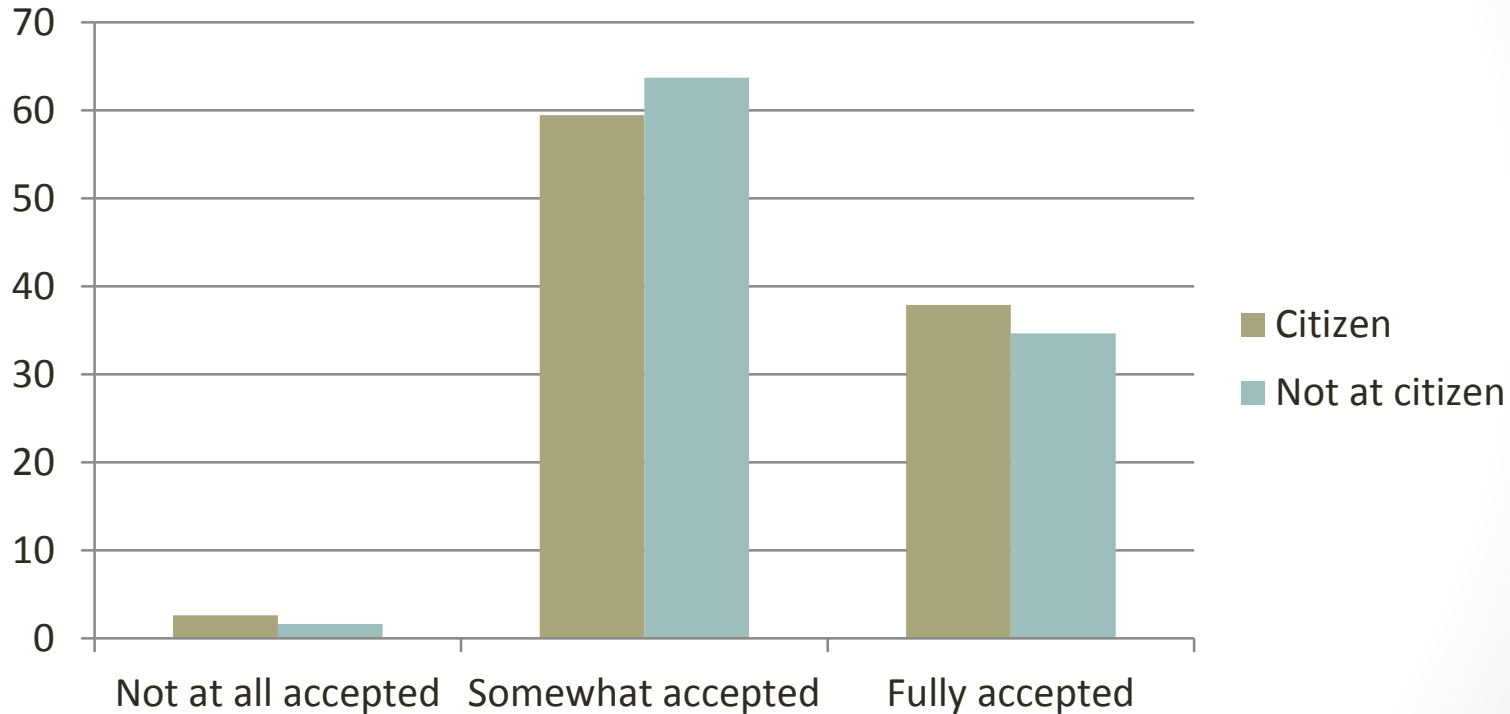


Source: WVS/NIS 2006

# Determinants of Support: Sense of Acceptance

- Immigrants presumably have a strong desire to be accepted as full members of their host country.
- Immigrants' assessments of how the host society views them are important.
- In order to feel like they belong, and to identify with the host community, immigrants need to feel accepted. Arguably, a weak sense of acceptance could diminish positive orientations toward the host country.

# Feelings of Acceptance in Canada by Citizenship Status



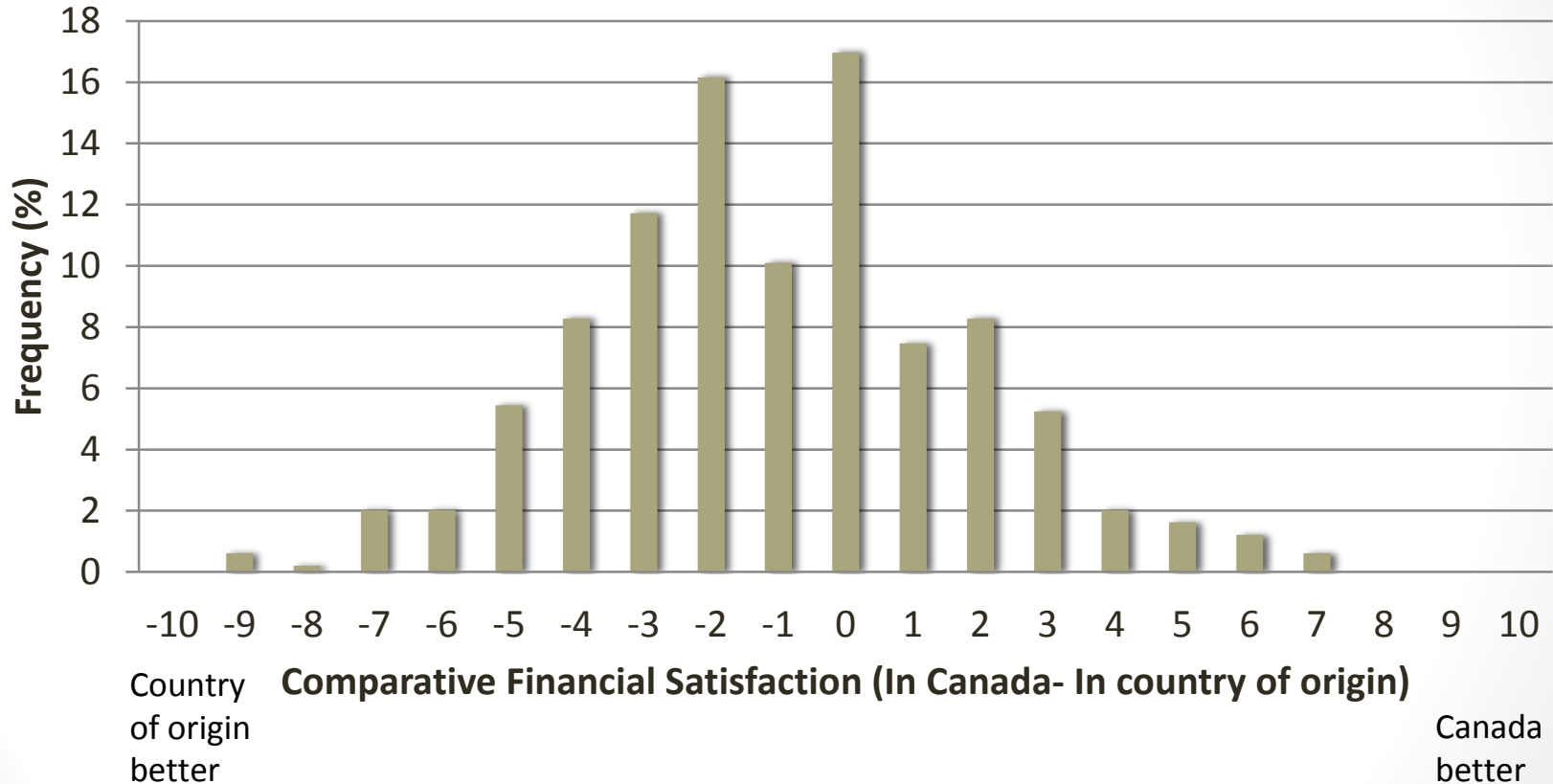
Source: WVS/NIS 2006

# Determinants of Support: Comparative Assessments

- Immigrants arrive with some awareness of how well the state in their country of origin delivers services, ensures economic well-being, and protects individual liberties and political rights.
- For many, the performance of the host country on these dimensions might well be significantly different from those that prevailed in their country of origin.



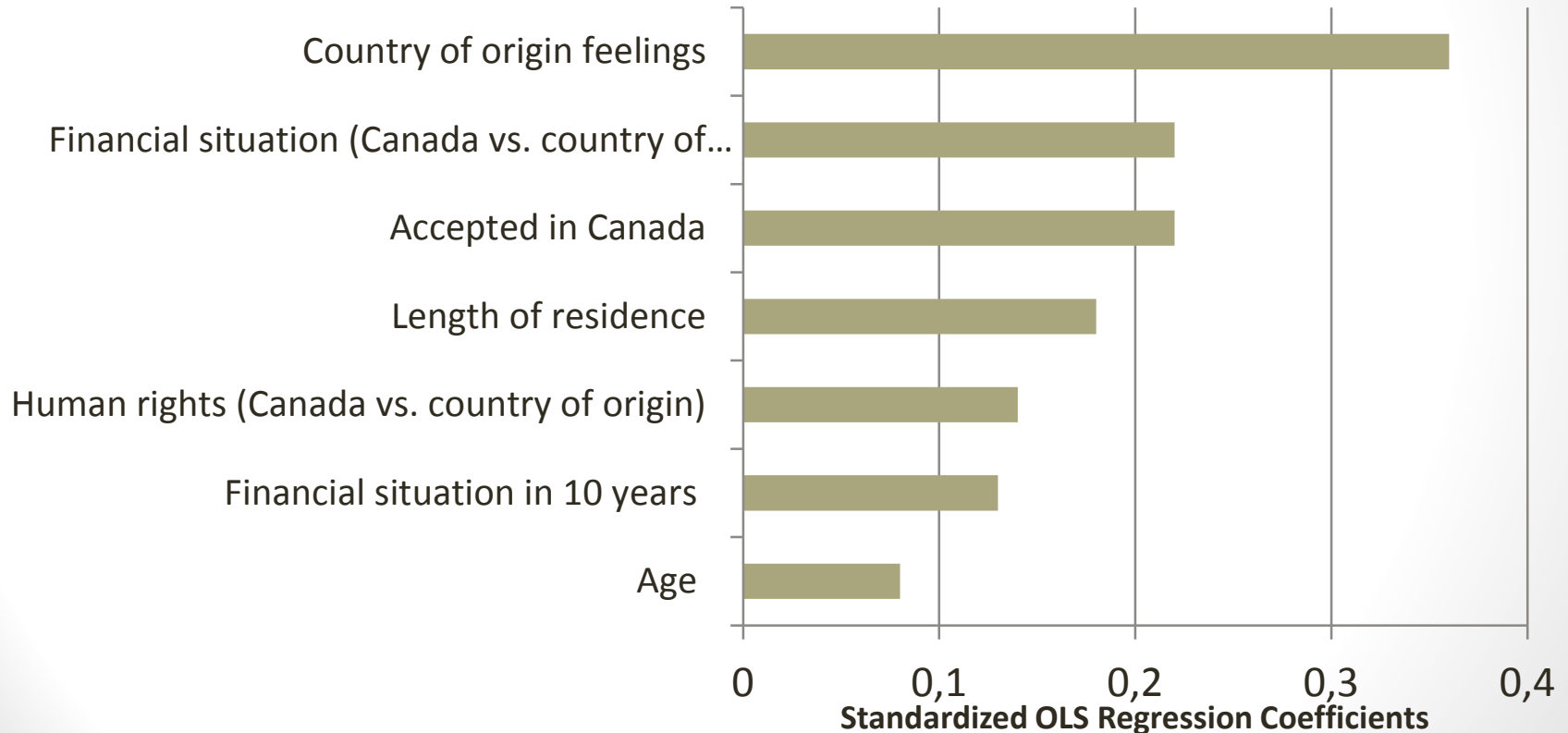
# Comparative Assessments of Finances (In Canada compared to in country of origin)



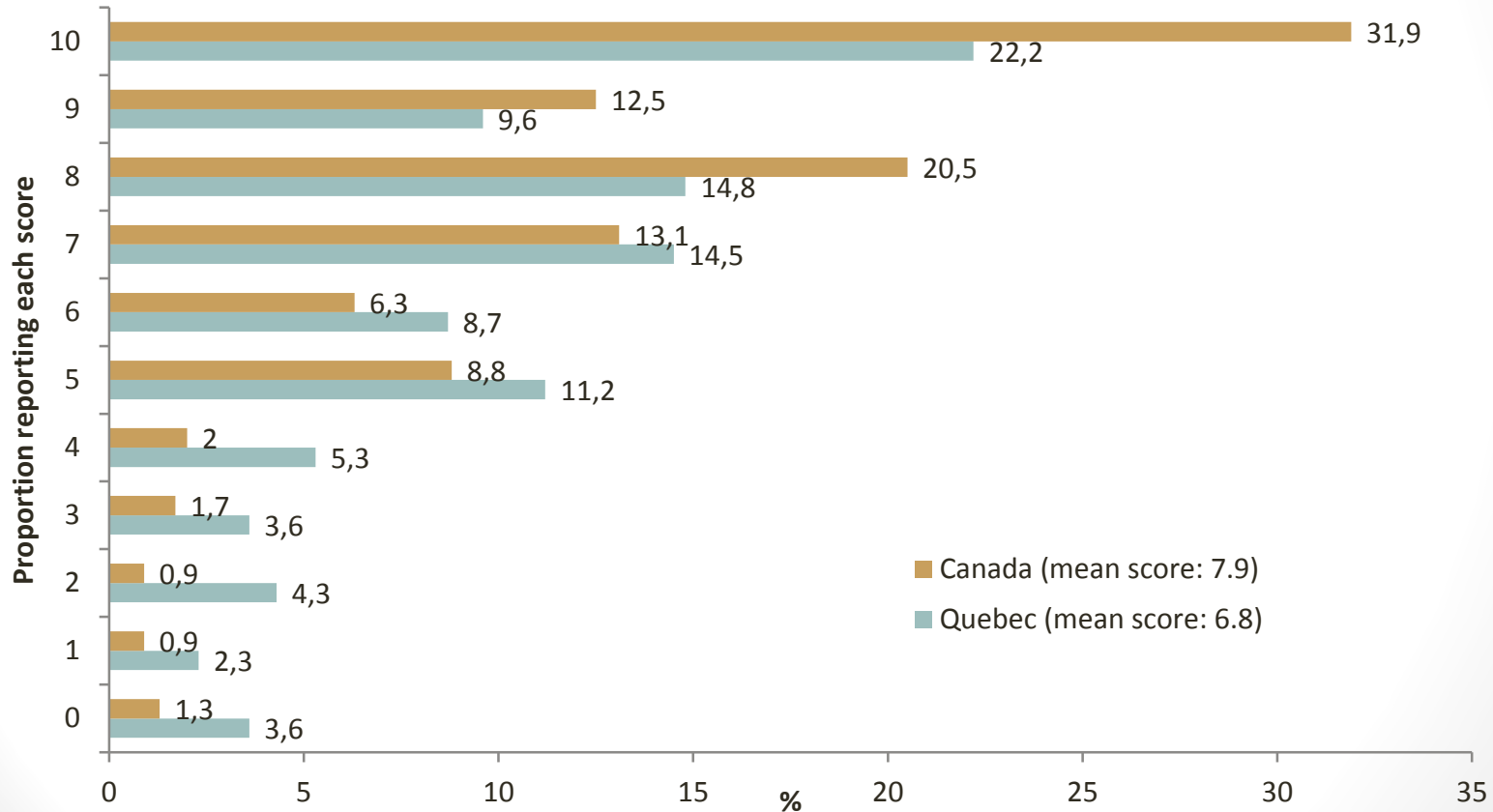
Source: WVS/NIS 2006

# Sources of Support for the Host Community

## Predictors of Feelings toward Canada among recent immigrants

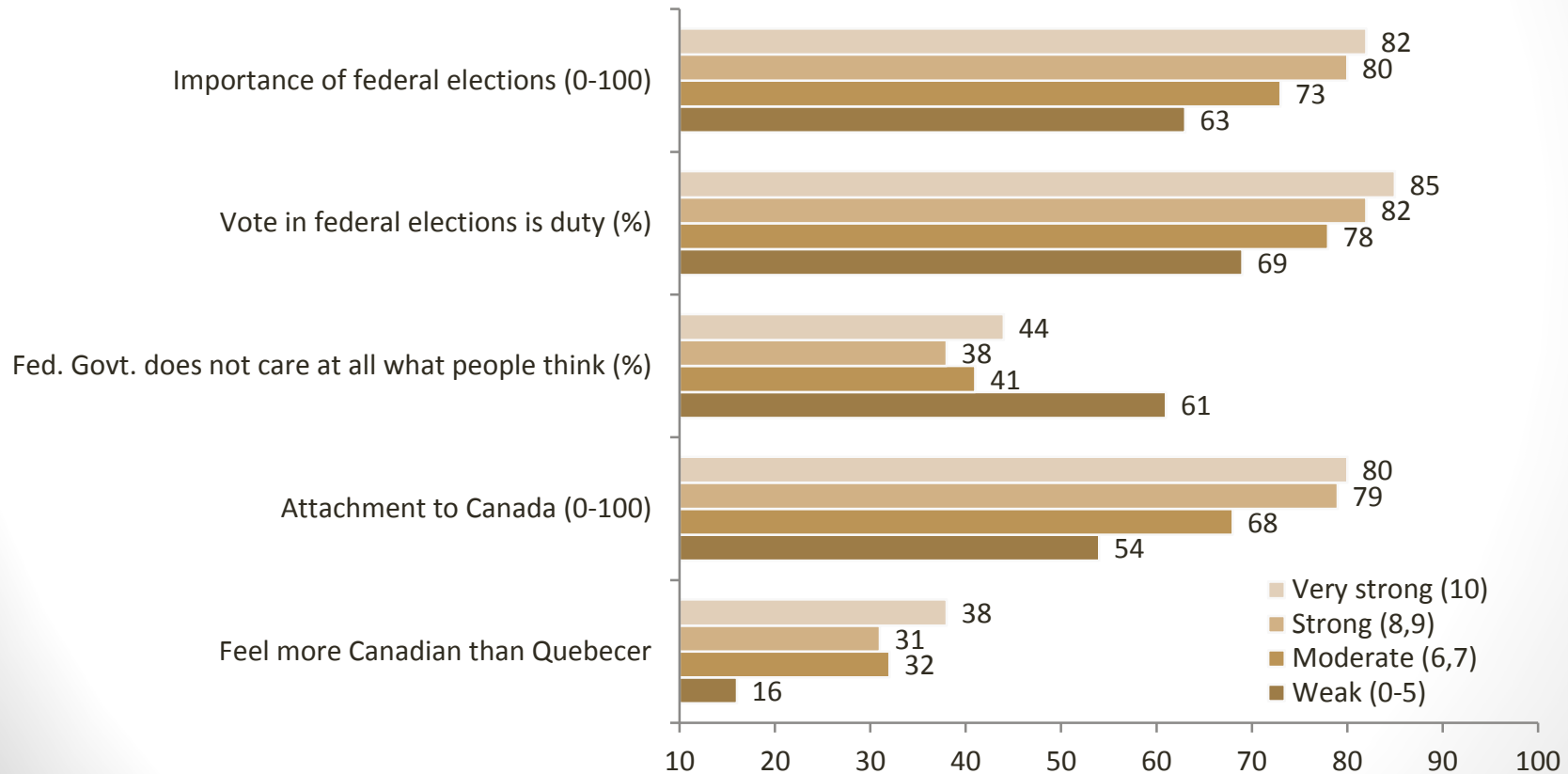


# Feeling Accepted Varies by Context



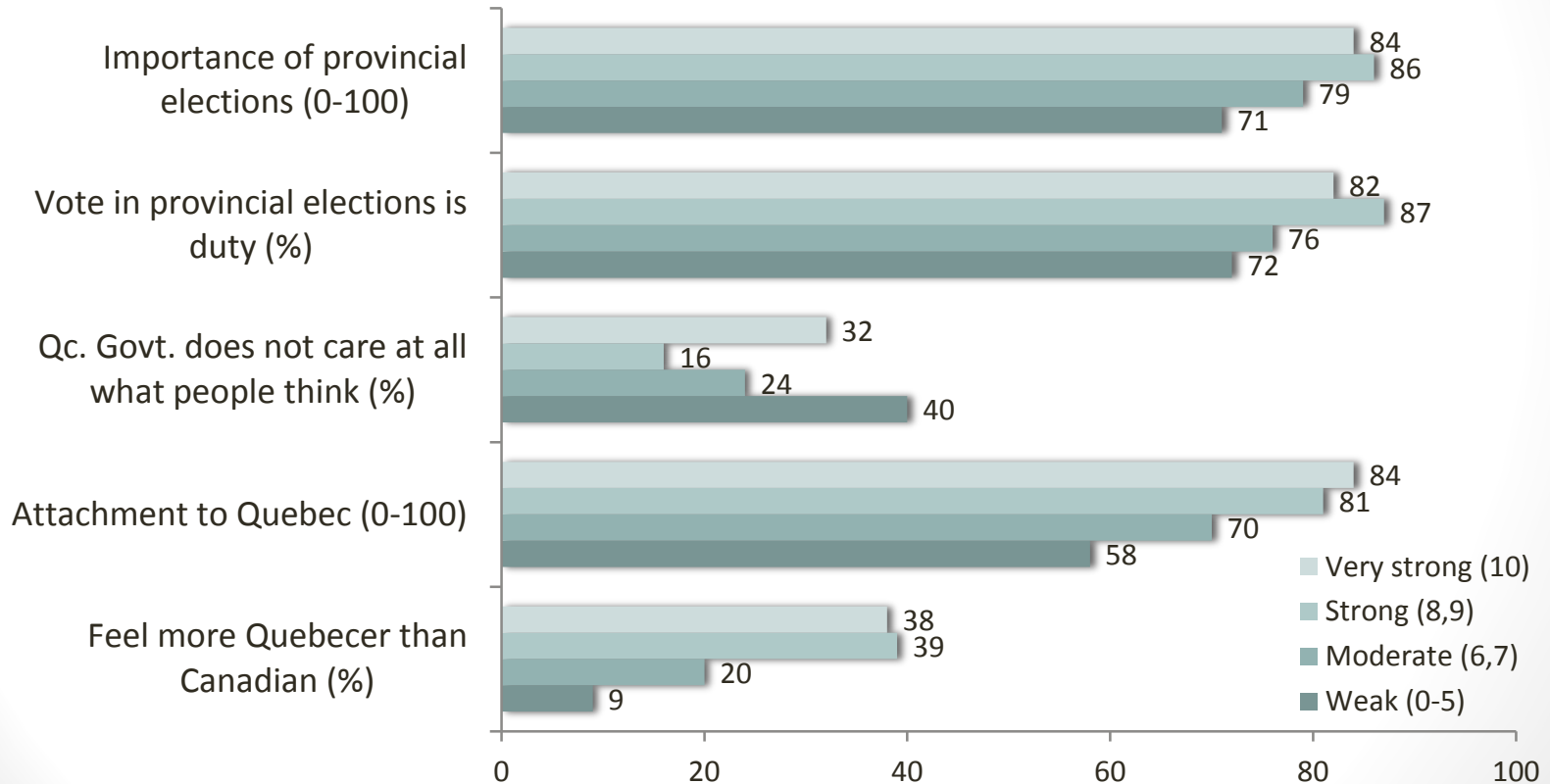
# Implications of Feeling Accepted for Citizenship

## Implications for integration into federal politics



# Implications of Feeling Accepted for Citizenship

## Implications for integration into Quebec provincial politics



# Policy Implications

- Subjective, individual-level attitudes about the country of origin and about experiences in Canada exert a direct influence on immigrants' orientations toward Canada
- The policy implications:
  - immigrants' subjective comparative assessments of their economic well-being in Canada are not uniformly positive. Canada needs to ensure immigrants' economic hopes are not dashed.
  - Immigrants' sense of acceptance goes some ways toward explaining political engagement and political support, in both provincial and federal contexts. Making new immigrants feel welcome is an important part of promoting full citizenship

# Avenues for Further Research

- Comparative assessments:
  - How do comparative assessments affect participation and support for regime principles?
  - How do comparative assessments (and their effects) vary across different host societies?
  - What other kinds of comparative assessments matter?
  - What are the long-term effects of these assessments?
- Feeling of Acceptance
  - Need for comparative evidence
  - What is the link between policies and feelings of acceptance?