

February By-elections: Matching Census Data with Ethnic Media Coverage (1-18 January 2019)

As some of you may be aware, I have been working through census data to develop profiles of all 338 federal ridings that focus on key demographic, economic, social and political indicators. I have been working with Canada's multilingual media monitoring service, MIREMS (www.mirems.com) to test out matching their ethnic media coverage with the census data.

The current by-elections provide an ideal opportunity to test out this approach and to assess how useful this could be for this year's October 19th general election.

Table 1 contrasts some of the key indicators for the three ridings, two urban and one rural. Burnaby South has the greatest number of immigrants and visible minorities, York Simcoe the least, with Outremont in the middle. None of these ridings have a significant Indigenous population. Outremont has the youngest population with the least number of married or common law relationships and the lowest average household size.

York Simcoe, given its lower number of immigrants, has the highest number of citizens of voting age.

Outremont has the highest number of men and women with university degrees, York Simcoe the lowest. Unemployment rates for men and women are highest in Outremont. Median total annual income is highest for men in York Simcoe and lowest in Outremont; for women, it is also highest in York Simcoe but lowest in Burnaby South. The percentage of low income individuals (Low income measure after tax) is lowest in York Simcoe and highest in Outremont for both men and women.

Burnaby South and Outremont elected NDP MPs in 2015, York Simcoe a Conservative.

TABLE 1: KEY RIDING INDICATORS

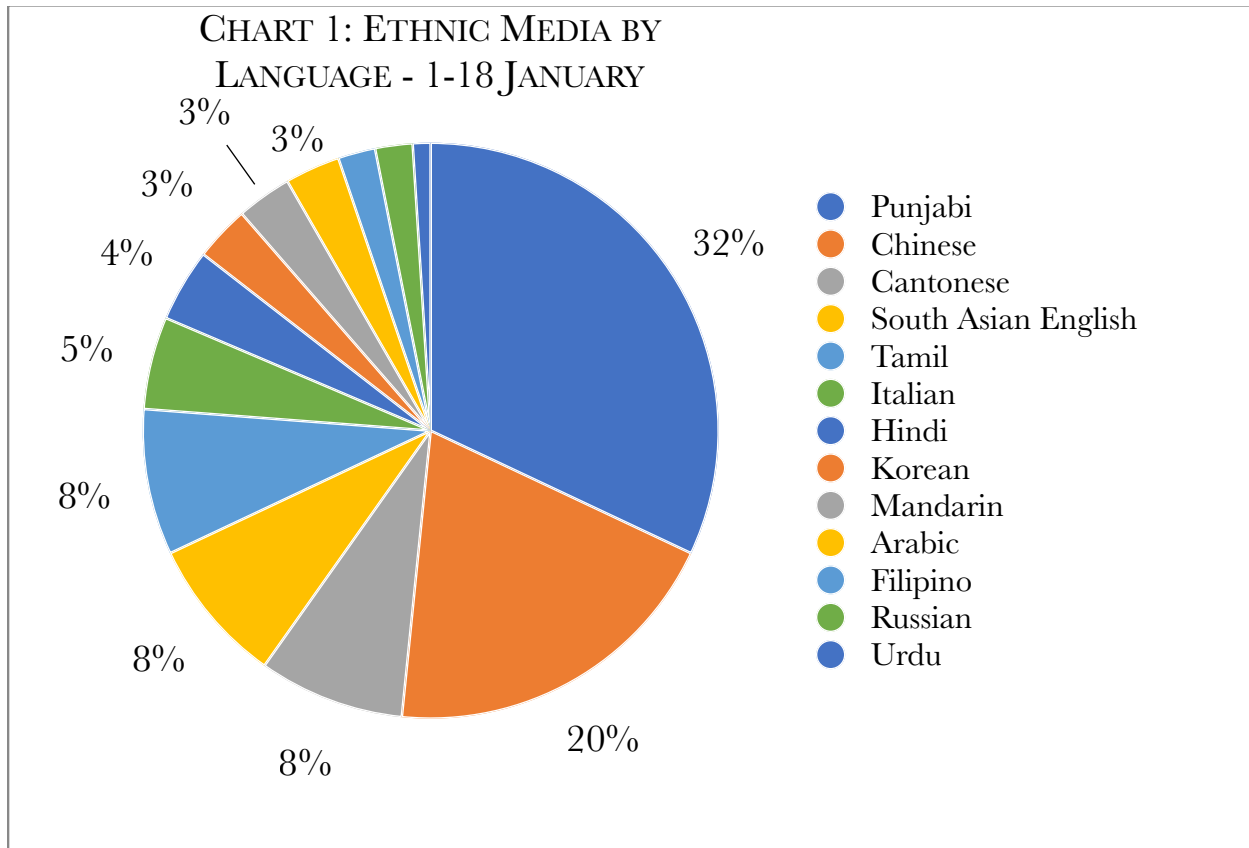
	Burnaby South (BC)	Outremont (QC)	York Simcoe (ON)
Population	111,973	102,088	104,010
Growth	6.6%	1.2%	9.9%
Density km2	2,429.9	8,542	131.4
Immigrants	53.7%	35.9%	18.8%
Percent first gen	60.4%	45.8%	19.5%
Percent economic	65.2%	66.8%	43.0%
Visible minorities	68.5%	28.8%	12.5%
Indigenous peoples	1.4%	0.6%	2.2%
Median age	40.1	34	40.7
Voting age citizens	66.2%	62.1%	74.9%
Married/common law	55.8%	44.2%	61.2%
Average household size	2.4	2	2.8
Shelter costs > 30% income	27.0%	29.1%	23.3%
University diploma (men)	43.4%	57.2%	14.5%
University diploma (women)	44.2%	61.7%	22.1%
Unemployment (men)	6.1%	10.0%	6.0%
Unemployment (women)	6.3%	9.8%	5.8%
Total median annual income (men)	\$33,216	\$27,686	\$44,906
Total median annual income (women)	\$24,473	\$26,800	\$30,016
Low income measure AT (men)	21.5%	26.1%	9.0%
Low income measure AT (women)	22.5%	26.0%	10.0%
2015 election	NDP 35.1%	NDP 43.9%	CPC 50.2%
Source: Census Profile 2016, Elections Canada			

The language most often spoken at home, the indicator that correlates most closely with ethnic media readership, is captured in Table 2. Predominate non-official languages are Mandarin and Cantonese (about 25 percent) whereas Outremont and York Simcoe have few non-official languages most often spoken at home.

TABLE 2: LANGUAGE MOST OFTEN SPOKEN AT HOME

Burnaby South			Outremont			York-Simcoe		
Language	Number		Language	Number		Language	Number	
English	56,690	56.9%	French	51,055	54.9%	English	91,635	92.5%
Mandarin	15,940	16.0%	English	21,825	23.5%	Portuguese	1,065	1.1%
Cantonese	9,145	9.2%	Spanish	2,525	2.7%	Russian	795	0.8%
Korean	2,670	2.7%	Arabic	2,240	2.4%	Spanish	585	0.6%
Tagalog	1,785	1.8%	Persian	1,395	1.5%	Italian	440	0.4%
Punjabi	1,265	1.3%	Portuguese	1,010	1.1%	Mandarin	410	0.4%
Persian	1,180	1.2%	Greek	840	0.9%	Tamil	400	0.4%
Spanish	1,020	1.0%	Romanian	805	0.9%	Cantonese	380	0.4%
Russian	1,020	1.0%	Tagalog	780	0.8%	Persian	295	0.3%
Serbian	685	0.7%	Russian	725	0.8%	French	295	0.3%

Ethnic Media Coverage



As one would expect, Chinese and South Asian media dominate in the by-election coverage given riding demographics, mainly Chinese Canadians, and the highly visible candidacy of NDP leader Jagmeet Singh. The ill-advised remarks of former Liberal candidate Karen Wang, her forced resignation and replacement by Richard Lee have further increased the riding visibility.

As a result, of the 97 media articles monitored 1 to 18 January, one third of ethnic media coverage is in Punjabi, with an additional 8 percent in the South Asian English media. Written Chinese media forms one fifth, with radio and TV in Cantonese forming 8 percent and in Mandarin, three percent.

In terms of candidate specific coverage, NDP leader Singh was covered in about two-thirds of the media, with many articles focussed almost exclusively on his campaign and related challenges (e.g., his inability to answer questions regarding the detention of Canadians in China). His Liberal and Conservative opponents were only mentioned in about 15 percent of media, with of course the controversy over former Liberal candidate Wang's divisive remarks being mentioned. PPC candidate Tyler Thompson was mentioned by close to six percent.

There was only one article (reprint really of her website bio) focussed on Outremont, a profile of Liberal candidate Rachel Bendayan in Arabic, with no coverage of the Conservative and NDP candidates (Jasmine Louras and Julia Sanchez respectively). Outremont has a significant Jewish population (11 percent in 2011). Bendayan is Jewish (likely Sephardic given her surname) as appears is Louras. Overall voting preferences of Canadian Jews have shifted from Liberal to Conservative reflecting the previous government's focus on combatting antisemitism and a more overt pro-Israel policy.

Basic news reporting and reprinting of mainstream media news article form the majority of ethnic media articles. However, close to 40 percent of the Punjabi and South Asian English, and about 13 percent of the Tamil media media are commentary. Only Punjabi talk shows featured by-election coverage (Burnaby South).

Out of the 16 commentaries analyzed, 12 were in Punjabi, three in South Asian English and one in the Tamil media. For the most part, these were more in the form of neutral analysis than presenting opinions. Only three commentaries expressed opinions. All were negative, two were in the Punjabi media (NDP leader Singh's ignorance of China's arrest of Canadians in relation for the extradition case of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou, former Liberal candidate Wang's divisive ethnic appeal on social media) and one in the South Asian English media (the same critique of NDP leader Singh).

Next week will likely feature more commentary on ethnic politics given the debate is has provoked among many Canadians, including those in the language groups covered.

See the MIREMS blog for some of the stories being covered: [Karen Wang and the ethnic vote: Multilingual media weighs in.](#)

In related election coverage, the Supreme Court of Canada's striking down the five-year limit for Canadian expatriate voting received coverage, particularly in Cantonese, Chinese and Mandarin media but also with significant coverage in Tamil media.