

Report card on politics: Welcome to N.L., Canada's 'most disengaged' province

This province near the back of the pack for political engagement compared to rest of country

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It may be easy to assume residents of Newfoundland and Labrador are political animals hungry for democracy, given the sometimes raucous political landscape.

However, the results of a national report card on how Canadians engage in politics suggest a dramatically different picture.

People in this province generally vote less, have fewer contacts with our elected members of Parliament and have very little interest in political meetings or donating to political parties.

According to the report, we're not great at boycotting products for political reasons, but we lead the pack when it comes to our level of dissatisfaction with the work of our MPs.

The report, called Democracy 360, set out to determine how Canadians communicate, participate and lead in politics.

It was conducted by a charity called Samara Canada, a group that says its mission is to reconnect Canadians to politics.

Turns out the group has plenty of work to do in this province, which the report found was one of the most disengaged places in Canada from formal politics, and the least trusting of political parties.

The citizens' online survey by Samara was conducted in December, and sampled more than 2,400 Canadian adults in all 10 provinces.

Here is a sampling of some of the key findings in Newfoundland and Labrador:

- About half of residents reported some form of contact by a federal political party or politician in the last year, which is the lowest in Canada. Nationally, the figure was 63 per cent.
- People from this province and in Quebec are the least likely in Canada to attend a political meeting (24 per cent) or contact an elected official (25 per cent). The national numbers are 29 per cent and 31 per cent, respectively.

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/report-card-on-politics-welcome-to-n-l-canada-s-most-disengaged-province-1.3008922>



- When it comes to using email or text messaging to discuss politics, only 21 per cent of residents do so, which is well below the national average of 31 per cent.
- Don't expect many residents of this province to open their wallets for political parties. Only 10 per cent of respondents said they donated in the last year, which is 50 per cent less than the national average.
- Newfoundland and Labrador is the most distrusting province towards political parties — 69 per cent expressed some level of distrust, compared to 58 per cent nationally.

The report aimed to go beyond the traditional measure of voter turnout in an attempt to measure the health of democracy in Canada.

But even that metric places Newfoundland and Labrador at, or near, the back of the pack.

Voter turnout for the 2011 federal election in Canada was 61.1 per cent, while the turnout in this province was 53 per cent.

And among the 10 federal ridings with the lowest turnout in 2011, two were in this province — Bonavista-Gander-Grand Falls-Windsor with 44 per cent, and Random-Burin-St. George's at 45.4 per cent.

According to Samara Canada, the survey has an accuracy of 1.99 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.