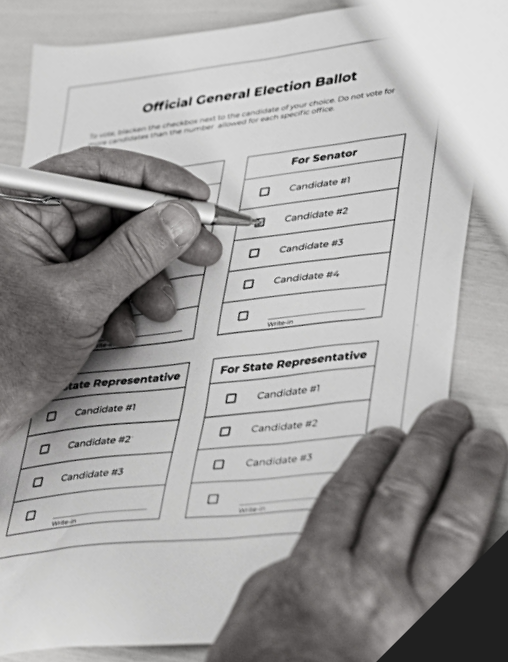


2021 CANADIAN FEDERAL ELECTION

ELECTION REPORT

**Facebook use by
political parties**



Shelley Boulianne, Leanne Stevens, Samantha Mullin, Caroline Rondeau, Yaseen El-hakim, Sunpreet Johal, and Natalie Mamo

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Methods.....	3
Sample.....	4
Findings	5
Language	5
Image & Video.....	6
Number of Persons	7
Emoji	8
Information Elements	9
Substantive Policy Issues	11
Negative Campaigning.....	14
Acclaim	16
Populism.....	18
Micro-targeting	20

Introduction

This project was led by Dr. Shelley Boulianne as a member of the DigiWorld network: <https://digidemo.ifkw.lmu.de/>

Six research assistants coded the Facebook posts for this project. These research assistants are listed as authors of this report. The author order reflects contributions to the project.

The authors would like to thank the DigiWorld network for the creation of the codebook used in this project. Additional variables were added to address the Canadian context. In addition, the authors would like to thank Dr. Jörg Haßler and Katharina Schlosser for programming the online questionnaire used to enter the data.

The Facebook posts were gathered using CrowdTangle. The posts were shared with us by Dr. Anders Olof Larsson. The authors would like to thank him for gathering the list of Facebook posts used in this analysis.

Methods

We coded Facebook posts from a four-week period beginning August 23, 2021 and ending September 20, 2021.

A team of six coders were trained using a codebook that includes more than 300 variables. This report covers a handful of the variables. Coders were given a Facebook link, which they opened in one window. Then in another window, they went through an online questionnaire hosted by SoSciSurvey.

If the post included content in French, coders used Facebook's "translate" function to convert the post into English. When this feature was not usable (e.g., videos and images), the post was coded by a bilingual coder and/or Dr. Shelley Boulianne.

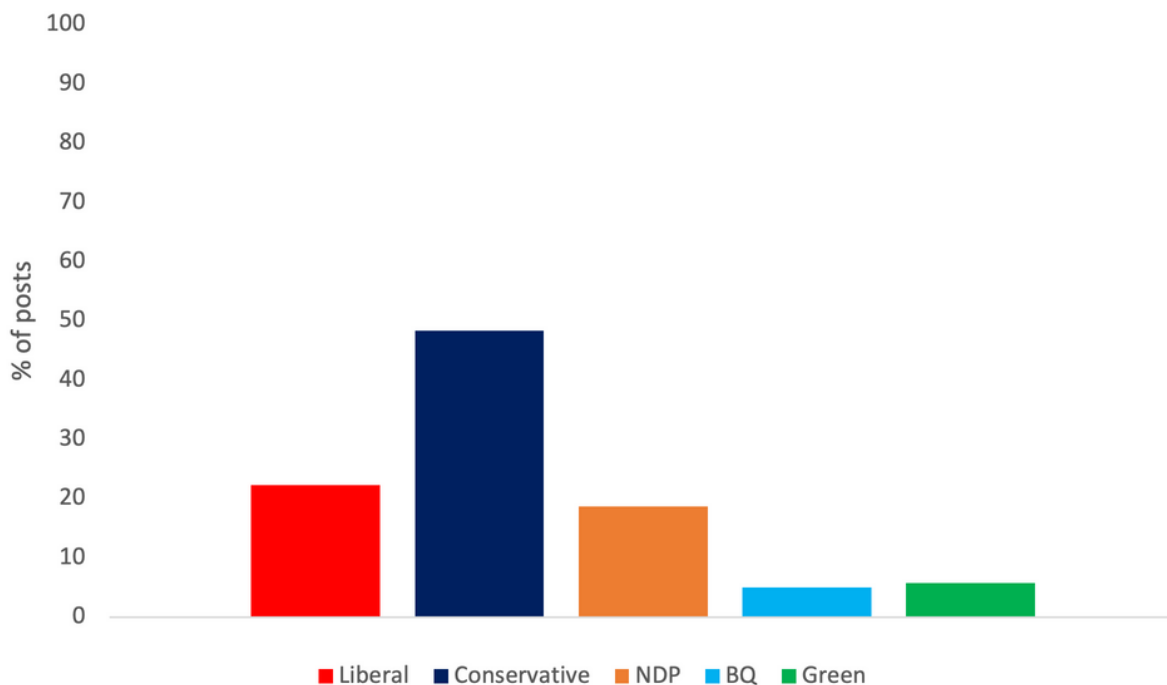
Further information about reliability is available by contacting Dr. Shelley Boulianne.

Sample

The team of coders reviewed the Facebook posts from five political parties:

- **Liberal Party of Canada:** <https://www.facebook.com/LiberalCA/>
- **Conservative Party of Canada:** <https://www.facebook.com/cpcpcc/>
- **New Democratic Party of Canada:** <https://m.facebook.com/NDP.NPD/>
- **Bloc Quebecois:** <https://m.facebook.com/blocquebecois/>
- **Green Party of Canada:**
<https://www.facebook.com/GreenPartyofCanada/>

Figure 1.
Posts per political party

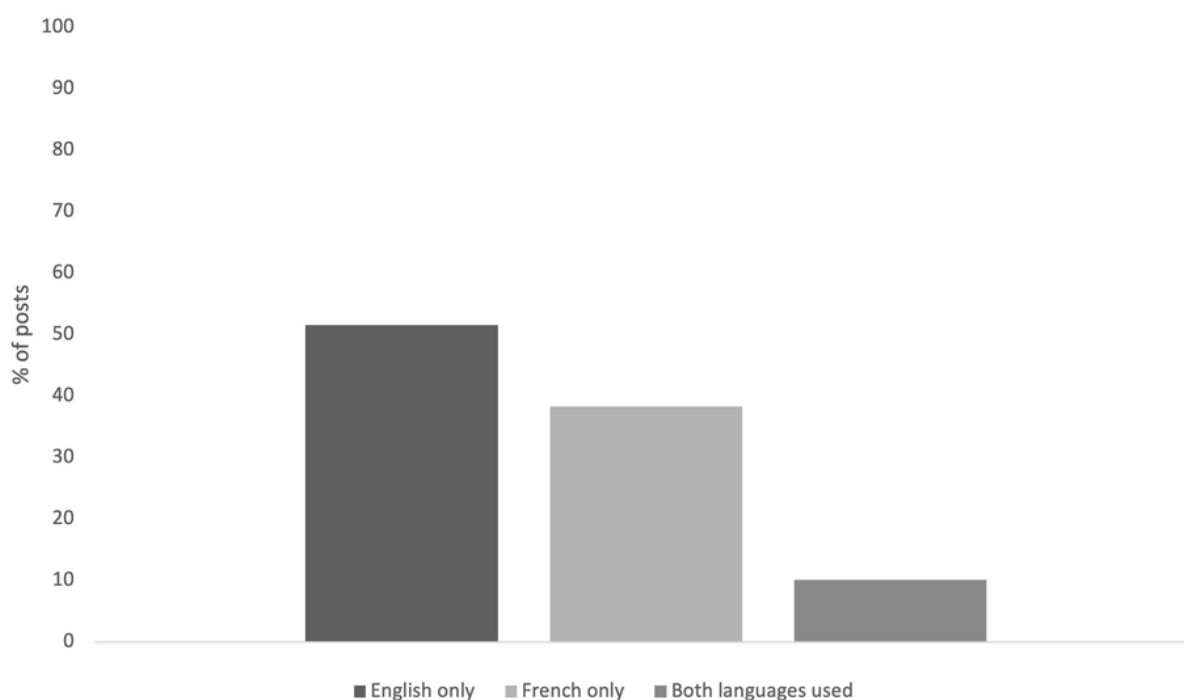


The Conservative Party posted the most during this four-week period. Approximately 48% of the posts are from the Conservative Party of Canada (Figure 1).

Findings

Language

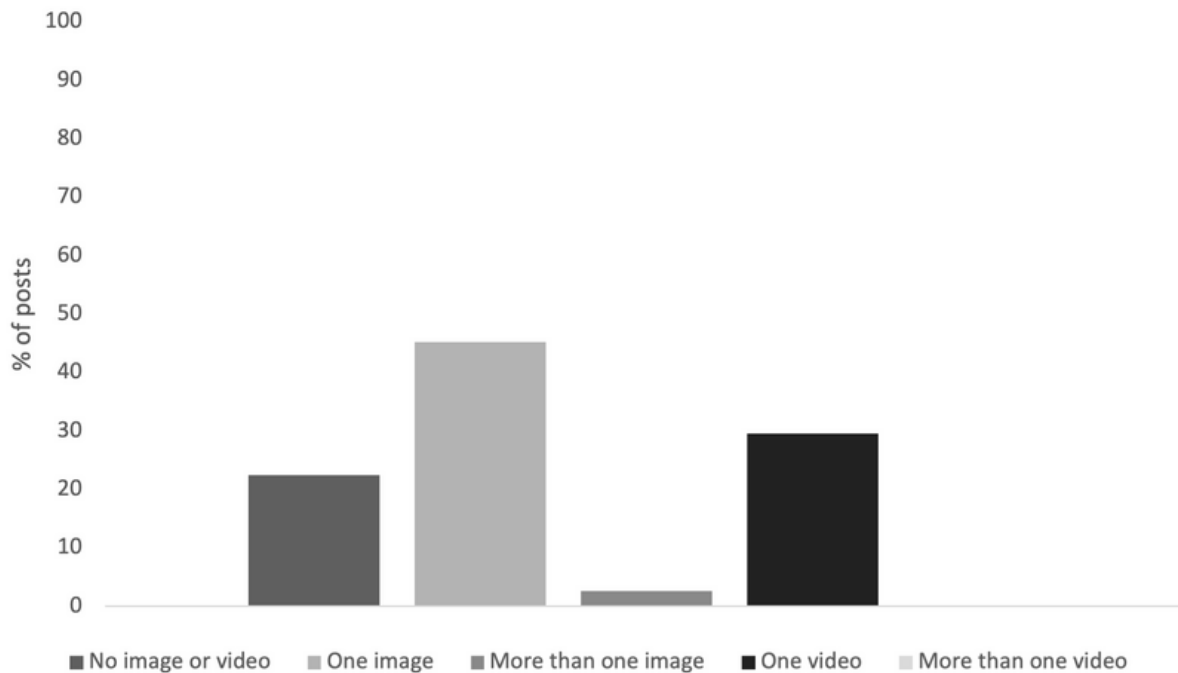
Figure 2.
Language of post



For this variable, the original language of the social media post was coded as French only, English only, or both languages used. About 52% of the posts were in English only (Figure 2).

Image & Video

Figure 3.
Presence of images and videos in post

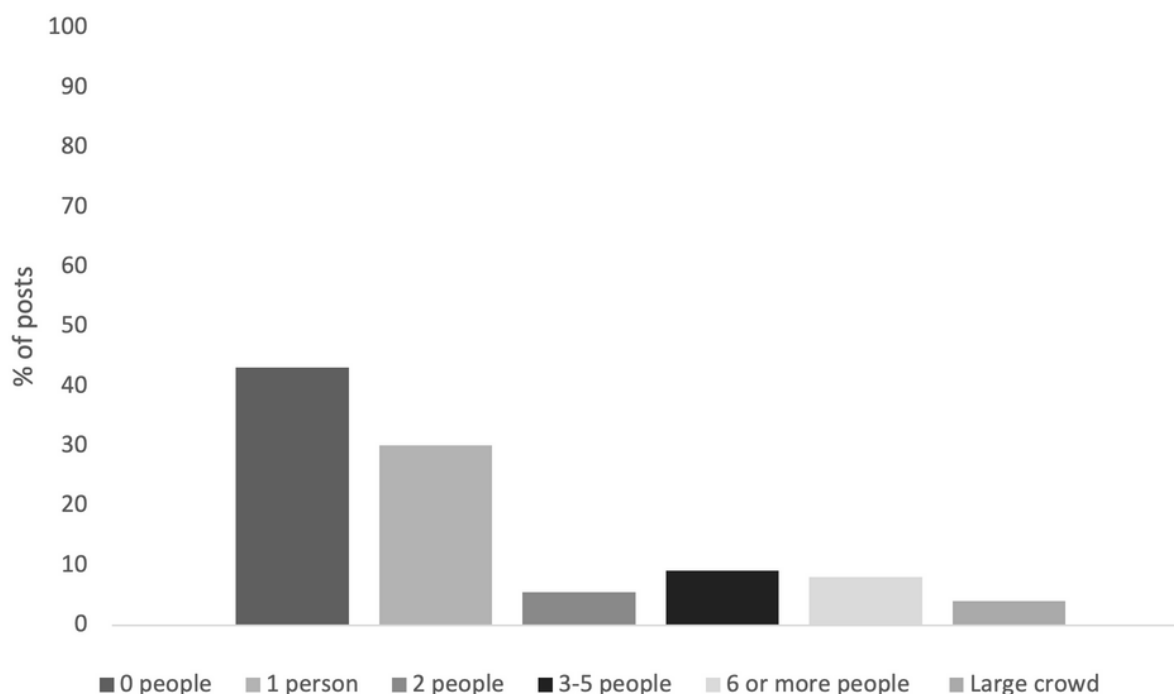


This variable looked at the type of visual media included in the post. The presence and quantity of images and/or videos embedded within the post were considered. About 46% of posts included a single image (Figure 3).

Number of Persons

Figure 4.

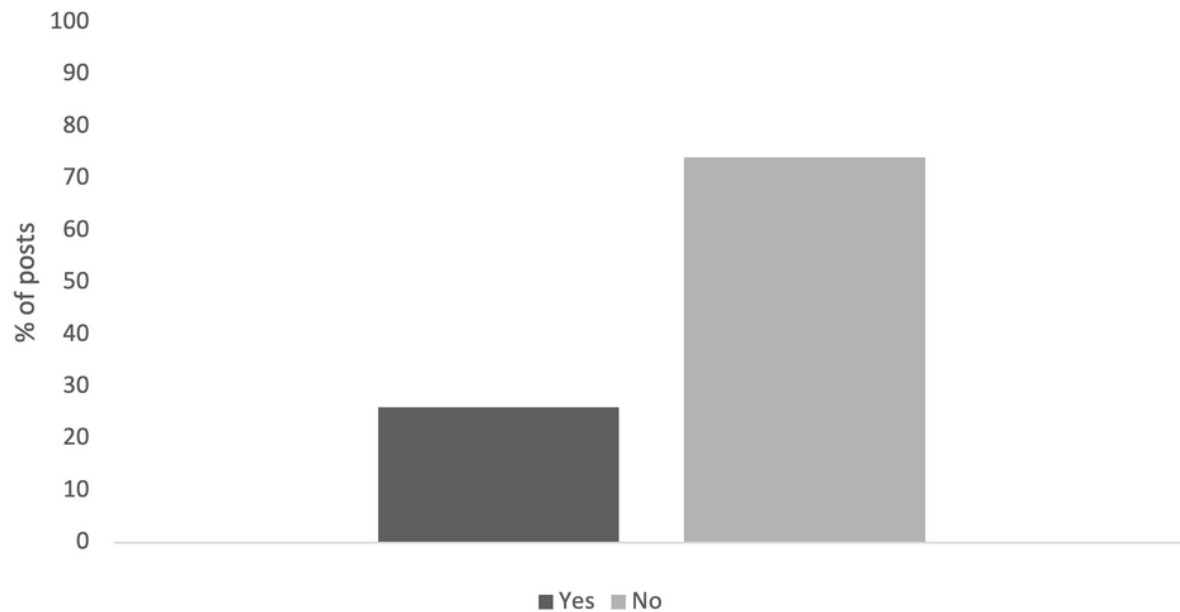
Presence of people in the images or videos



If the posts included an image or video, we noted the number of people visible in the image or video. For posts containing multiple images, only the first image (top left) was coded. In the case of videos, the first minute after any still image was coded. Approximately 43% of posts did not include a person (Figure 4).

Emoji

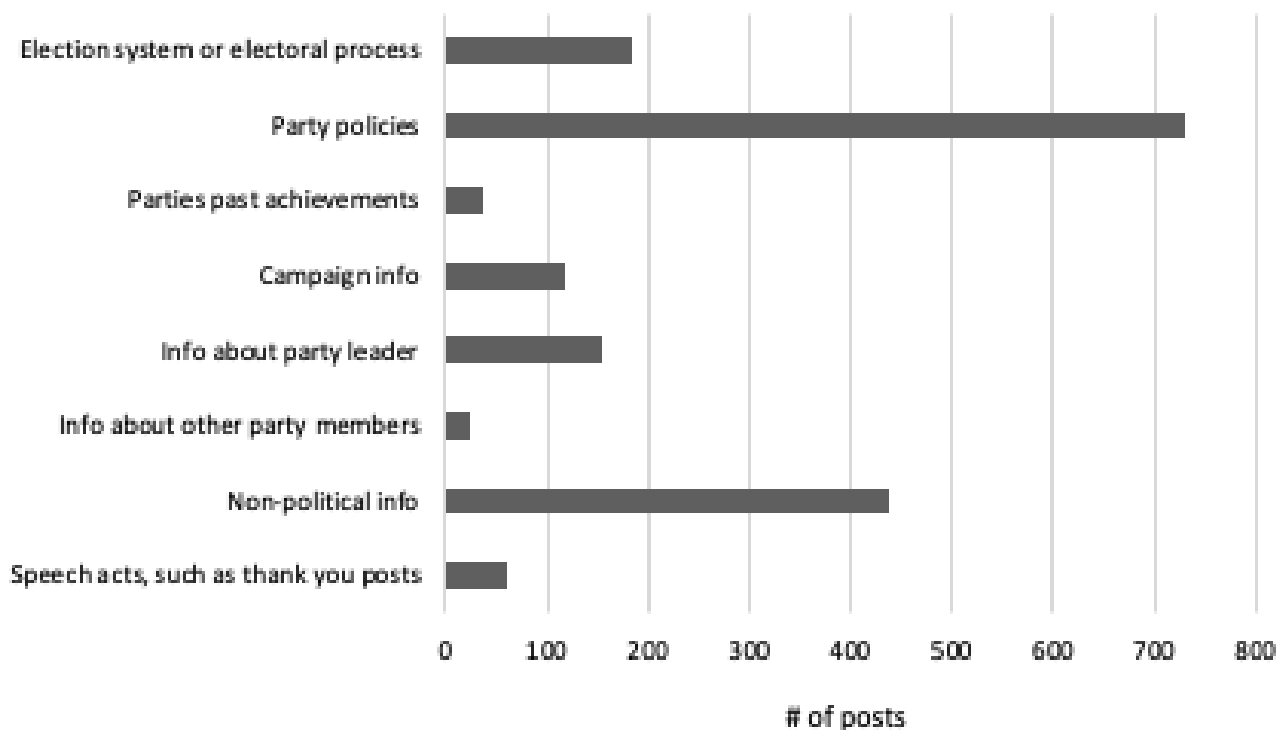
Figure 5.
Use emojis in post



This variable asked whether or not the post contained an emoji. This included arrows and check marks, among others. Approximately 74% of posts did not contain an emoji (Figure 5).

Information Elements

Figure 6.
Information elements



Note: A post could contain more than one type of information elements.

Here, we coded if the post contained any information which may help to inform the recipient about a certain topic. One post may have included information elements from multiple categories; as such, we present counts instead of percentages.

Information about party policies was the most popular informational post (Figure 6).

Information Elements (Continued)

Figure 7.

Information elements example (party policies)



Conservative Party of Canada - Parti conservateur du Canada ✓

Sep 1, 2021 · 🌐

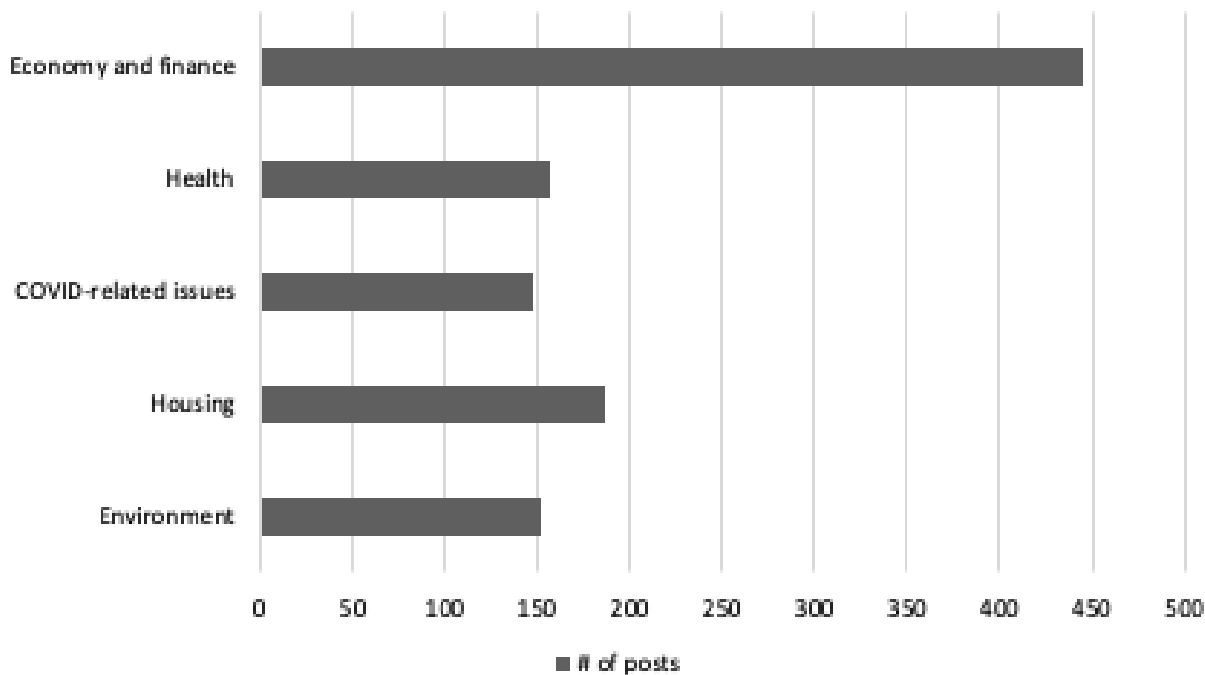
Canada's Recovery Plan will build 1 million homes in 3 years and ban foreign investors from buying homes to secure housing for Canadians.



Figure 7 is an example of a post that would be coded as containing information on a party's own policies.

Substantive Policy Issues

Figure 8.
Substantive policy issues



Note. The graph presents the five most common policy issues. A post could cover more than one policy issue.

For this variable, we coded over 35 possible policy topics. Topics could be addressed using textual elements, such as a written caption, or visual elements, such as photographs or graphics. All topics mentioned in a post were coded. Figure 8 shows the five most common policy topics we encountered. Posts about the economy and financial issues were the most popular policy post.

Provided in Figure 9, Figure 10, and Figure 11 are examples of what we would code as economy and finance, health, and housing, respectively.

Substantive Policy Issues (Examples)

Figure 9.

Substantive policy issues (economy and finance)



Conservative Party of Canada - Parti
conservateur du Canada ✓

Sep 5, 2021 · 🌐

We have a plan to fight food inflation and tackle the rising cost of living. One of Canada's top experts on food policy agrees.



Figure 10.

Substantive policy issues (health)



Green Party of Canada | Parti vert
du Canada ✓

Sep 13, 2021 · 🌐

The COVID-19 crisis has revealed deadly structural flaws in how we care for our most vulnerable; our long-term care system has failed residents and staff members.

The Green Party will continue to propose solutions to fix the failures of our Long-Term Care system.

Read more: <https://www.greenparty.ca/en/platform/life-with-dignity#longterm-care-reform>

Authorized by the registered agent for the Green Party of Canada.



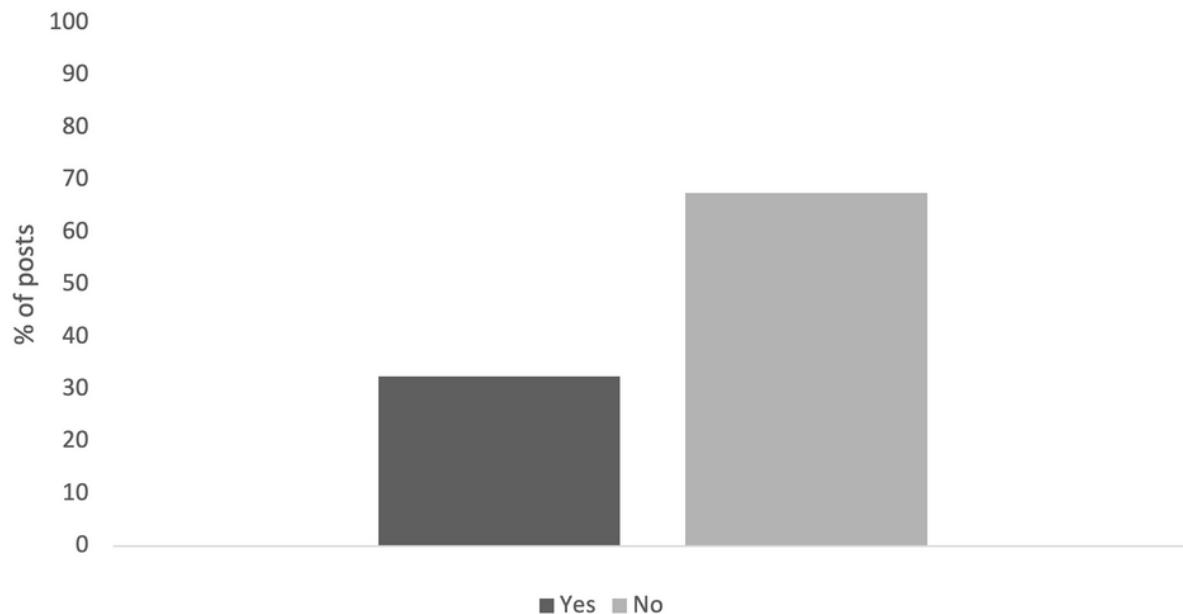
Substantive Policy Issues (Examples)

Figure 11.
Substantive policy issues (Housing)



Negative Campaigning

Figure 12.
Negative campaigning



Negative campaigning involves all forms of attack on the political opponent, including the party, politician, coalition, or institution. Negative campaigning can refer to socially relevant topics, use stereotypical traits, highlight shortcomings, as well as criticize and attack the qualities or activities of parties and politicians. Most posts were not deemed to be "negative" (Figure 12).

Figures 13 and 14 are examples of what we would consider to be negative campaigning.

Negative Campaigning (Examples)

Figure 13.
Negative campaigning example

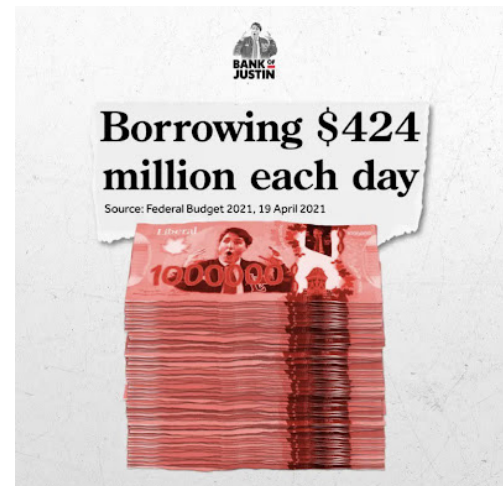


Figure 14.
Negative campaigning example

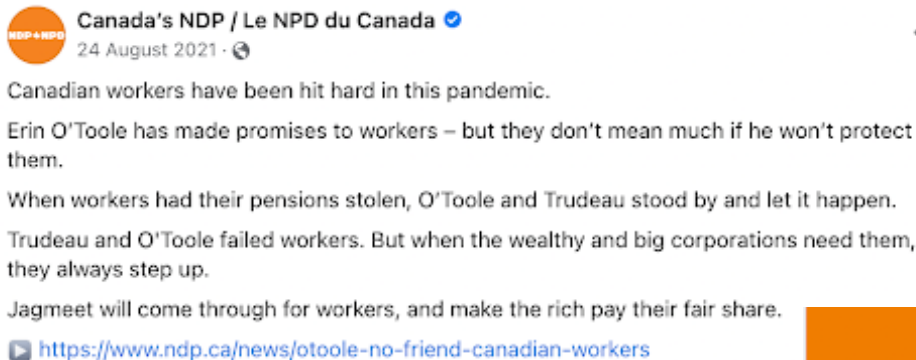
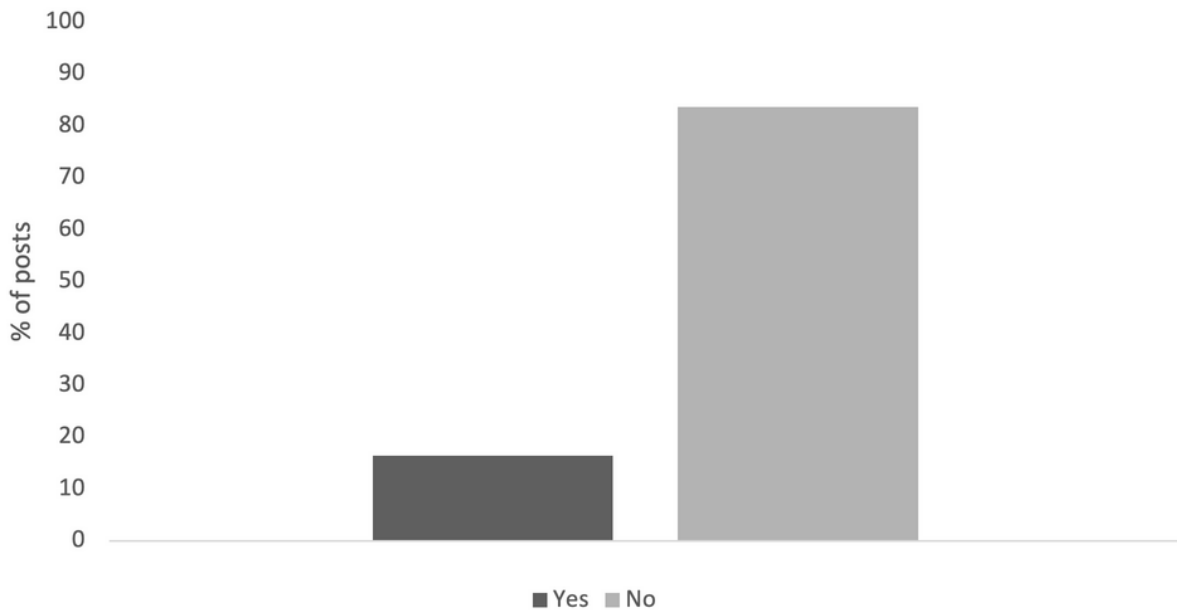


Figure 15.
Acclaim



In addition to negative campaigning, political actors may use acclaim to present their own issue stances, policies, and past work of party politicians as positive. Acclaim is used to “applaud” one's own party or candidate. These types of posts were rare (Figure 15).

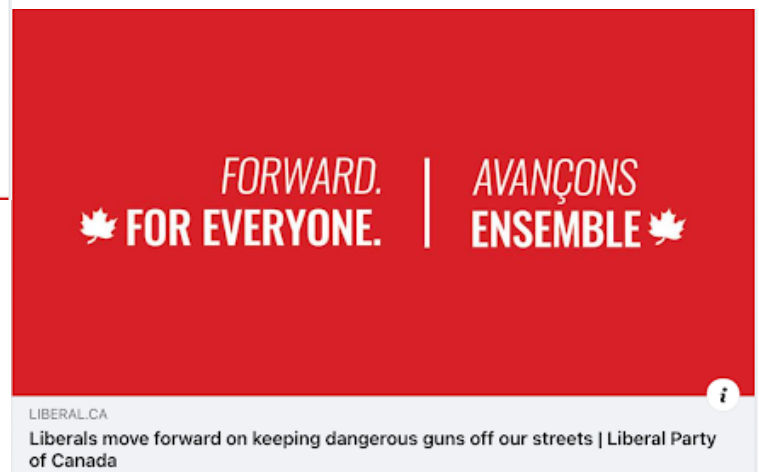
Figures 16 and 17 are examples of what we would consider to be an acclaim.

Acclaim (Examples)

Figure 16.
Acclaim example

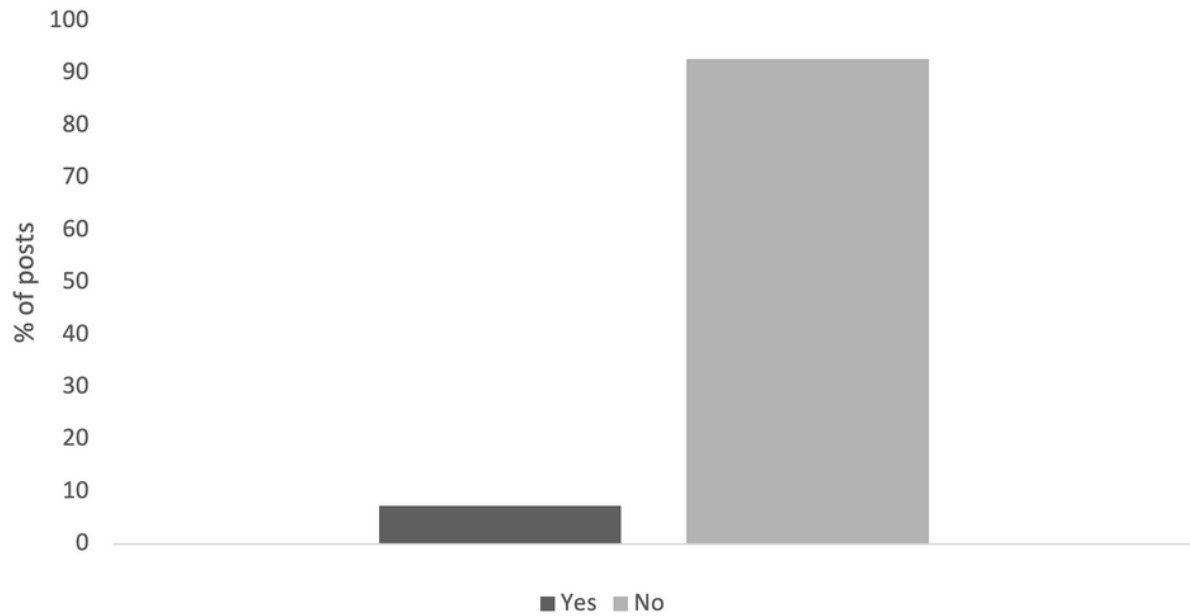


Figure 17.
Acclaim example



Populism

Figure 18.
Populism



The populist tendency of a post consists of criticisms of the elite while the speaker pretends to defend the interests of the people or the majority of citizens. These types of posts were rare (Figure 18).

Figure 19 is an example of what would be coded as populism.

Populism (Examples)

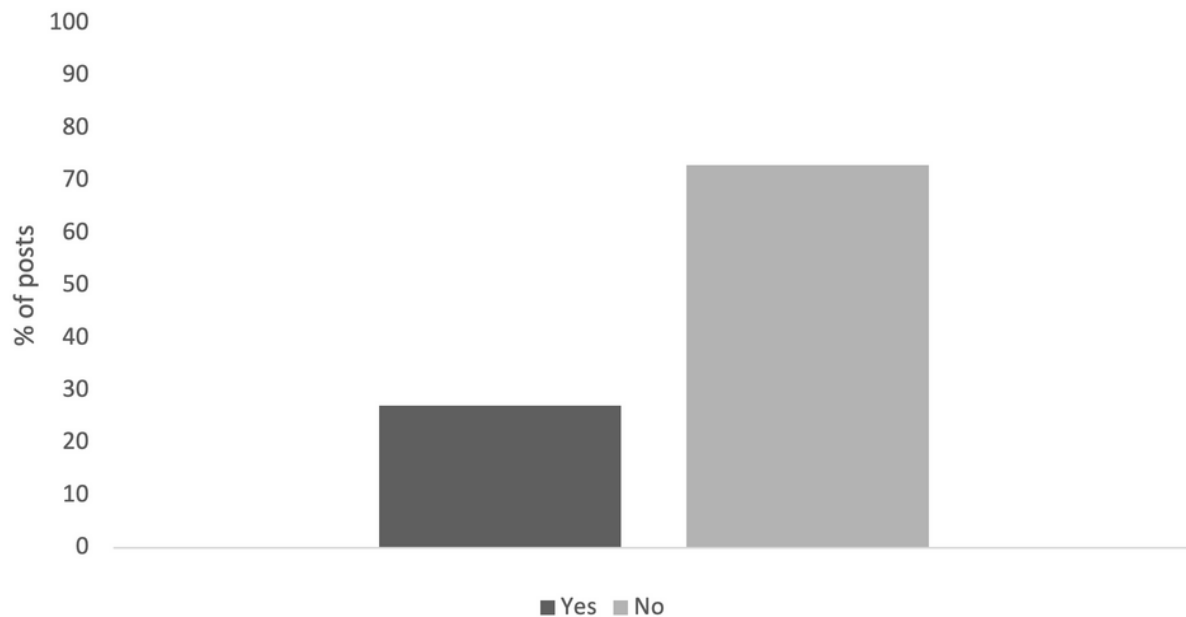
Figure 19.
Populism example



Micro-targeting

Targeting is understood as a strategic process aimed at persuading voters or mobilizing supporters by showing them messages tailored to them, while other groups are neglected. Targeting was only coded if a post referred to a group, either directly through statements such as “Women, vote for us,” or indirectly by explicitly expressing concern towards the target group’s interests, such as “We stand up for women’s rights.” About 27% of party posts contained content targeting a specific group (Figure 20).

Figure 20.
Micro-targeting



Figures 21 and 22 are some examples of what we coded as targeting.

Micro-Targeting (Examples)

Figure 21.
Micro-targeting example



Figure 22.
Micro-targeting example



By taking bold climate action, we will create new jobs, strengthen our economy, and grow the middle class — and while doing that, we'll also make sure our kids and grandkids have clean air and water. Find out how at liberal.ca/climate.



