

WHO GIVES? CAMPAIGN FINANCING IN THE 2011 FEDERAL ELECTION

ABSTRACT

Elections are seen to be the backbone of the democratic experience around the world. However, the process can often be loaded, skewed and biased due to several factors. This essay sought to examine how campaign financing during the 2011 Canadian federal election affected the final results and what are the implications of these results.

METHODOLOGY

1. I used the Elections Canada website and got the disclosed financial information of all candidates running for the three major parties (Conservatives, Liberals, and NDP).
2. I compiled totals and averages from the three parties.
3. I kept in mind that data can be skewed by discrepancies and outliers

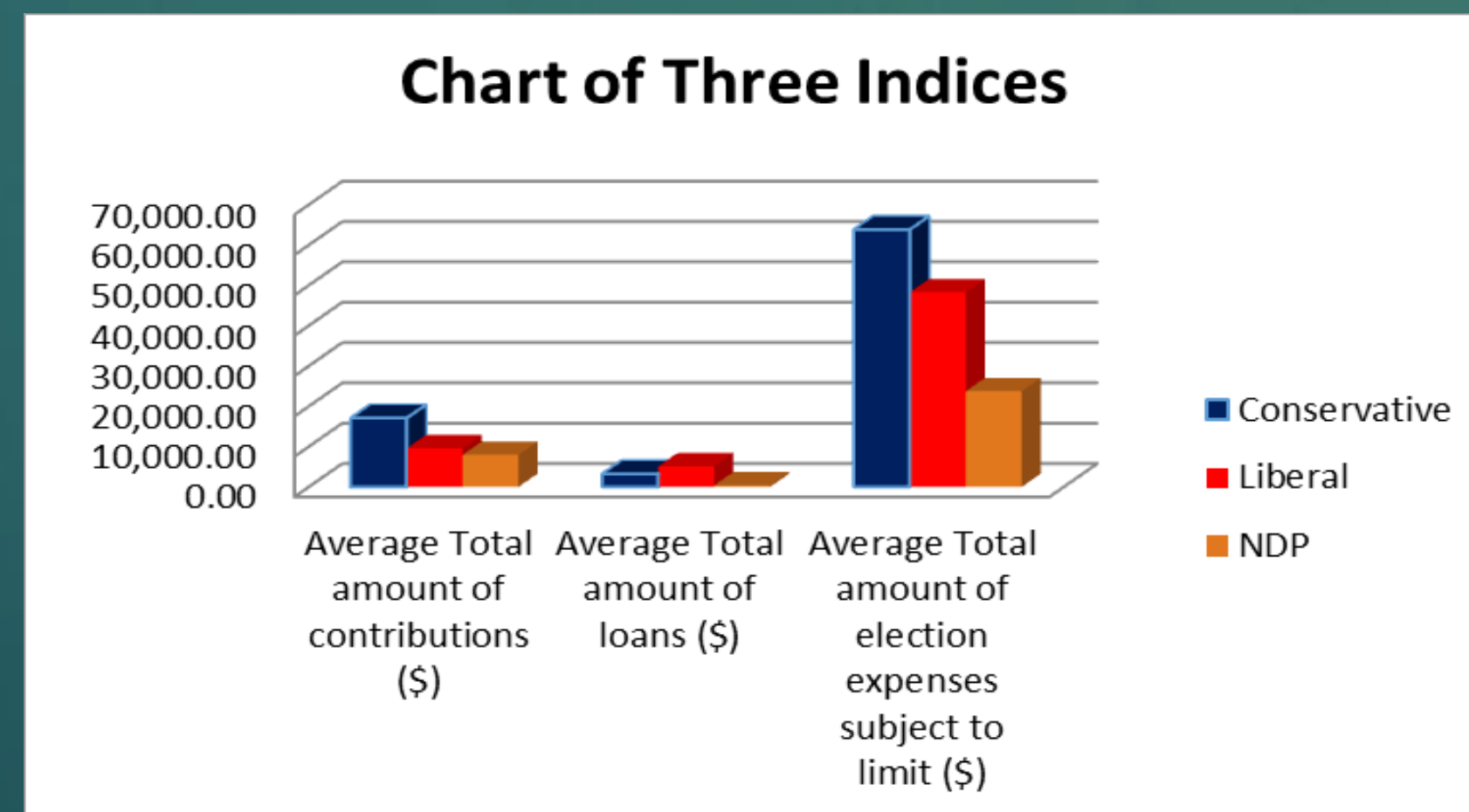
CAVEATS

1. The data only came from the three major parties. The Bloc and Greens were not analyzed, as well, minor parties were not studied
2. A few candidates did not disclose their financial data. Thus, I had to use the formula $308 \cdot x$ with x representing empty data sets to get the total population
3. The standard deviation was not calculated

RESULTS:

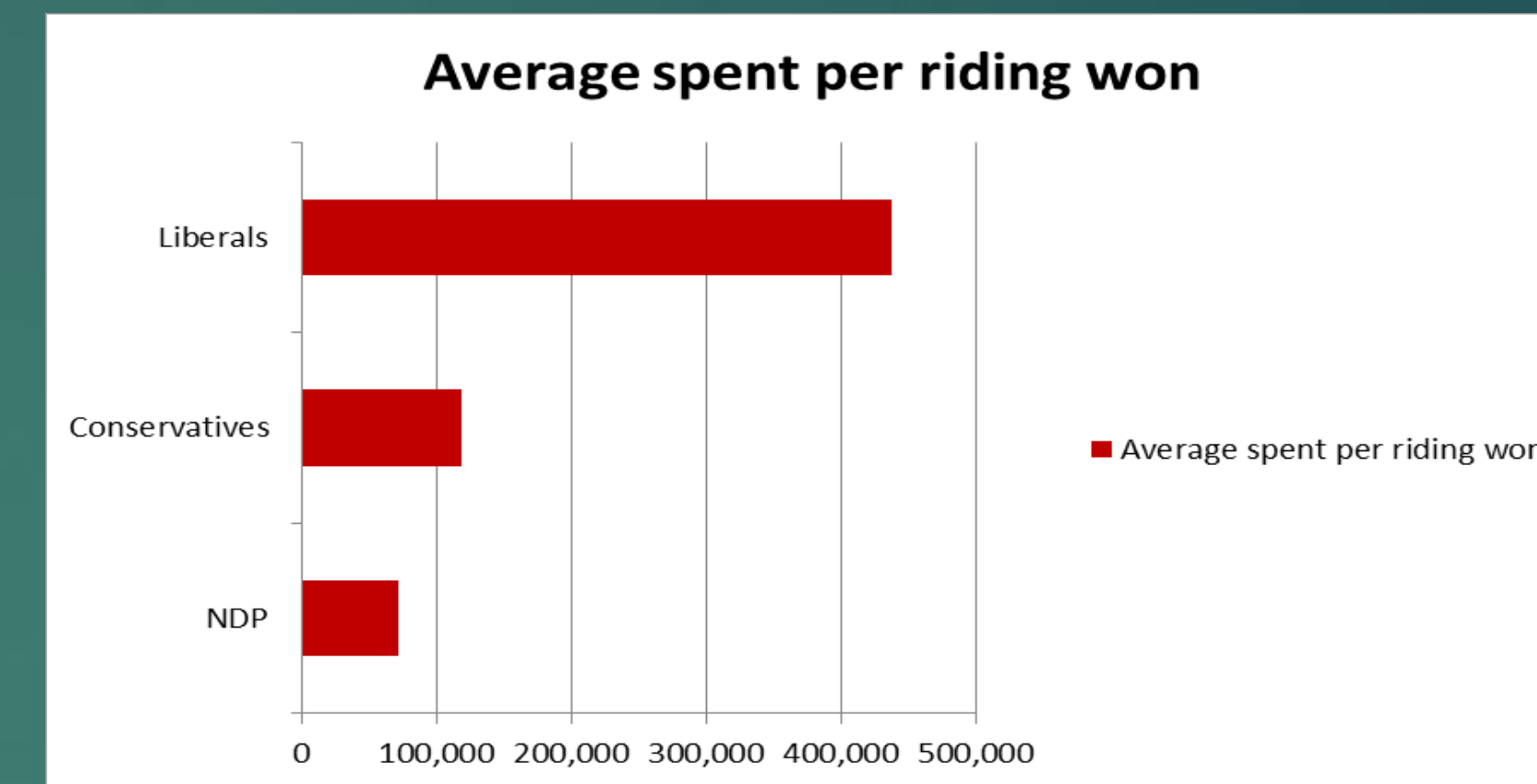
YES:

1. Money makes a difference (If all major parties spent to their maximum allowable limit in the 1984 election 35 seats would have changed hands).
2. Canada has a brokerage system (non-ideological) allowing campaign spending to affect voting behaviour, (support for a party is positively correlated to money spent)
3. In the 2011 context, the party that spent the most, won a majority government.



NO:

1. Spending a lot of money doesn't guarantee victory, just ask the Conservatives in 1993 and Liberals of 2011
2. The party that spent the least on average won Official Opposition
3. Other factors as discussed below affects how people give money and how they perceive candidates.



OTHER FACTORS?

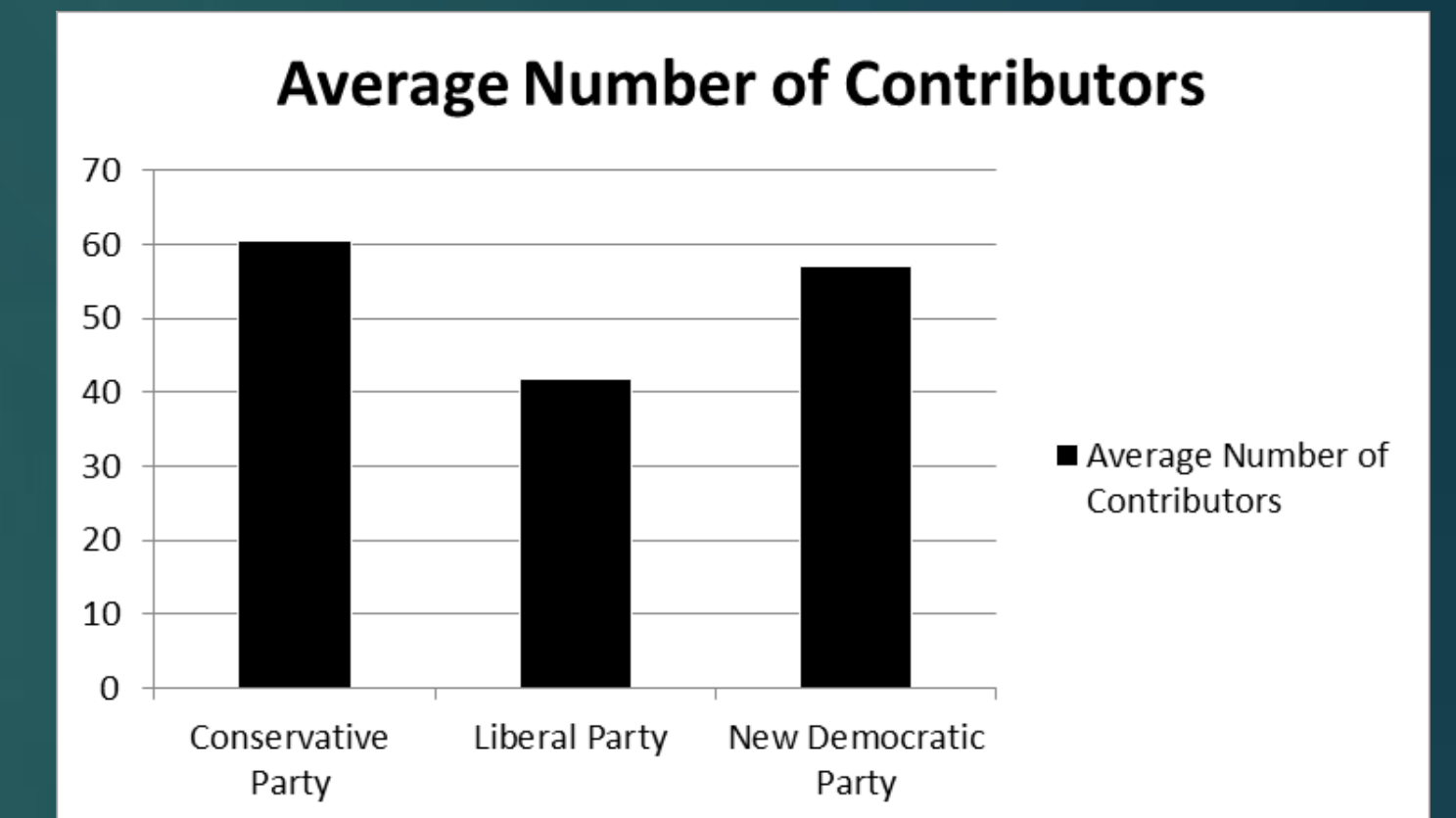
1. Perception of candidate (charisma, skill) helps candidate fundraise.
2. Gender, race, sexual orientation and locale make a difference in the eyes of the voters
3. How well does the party spend the money?
4. Media coverage can influence public perception of party and candidate



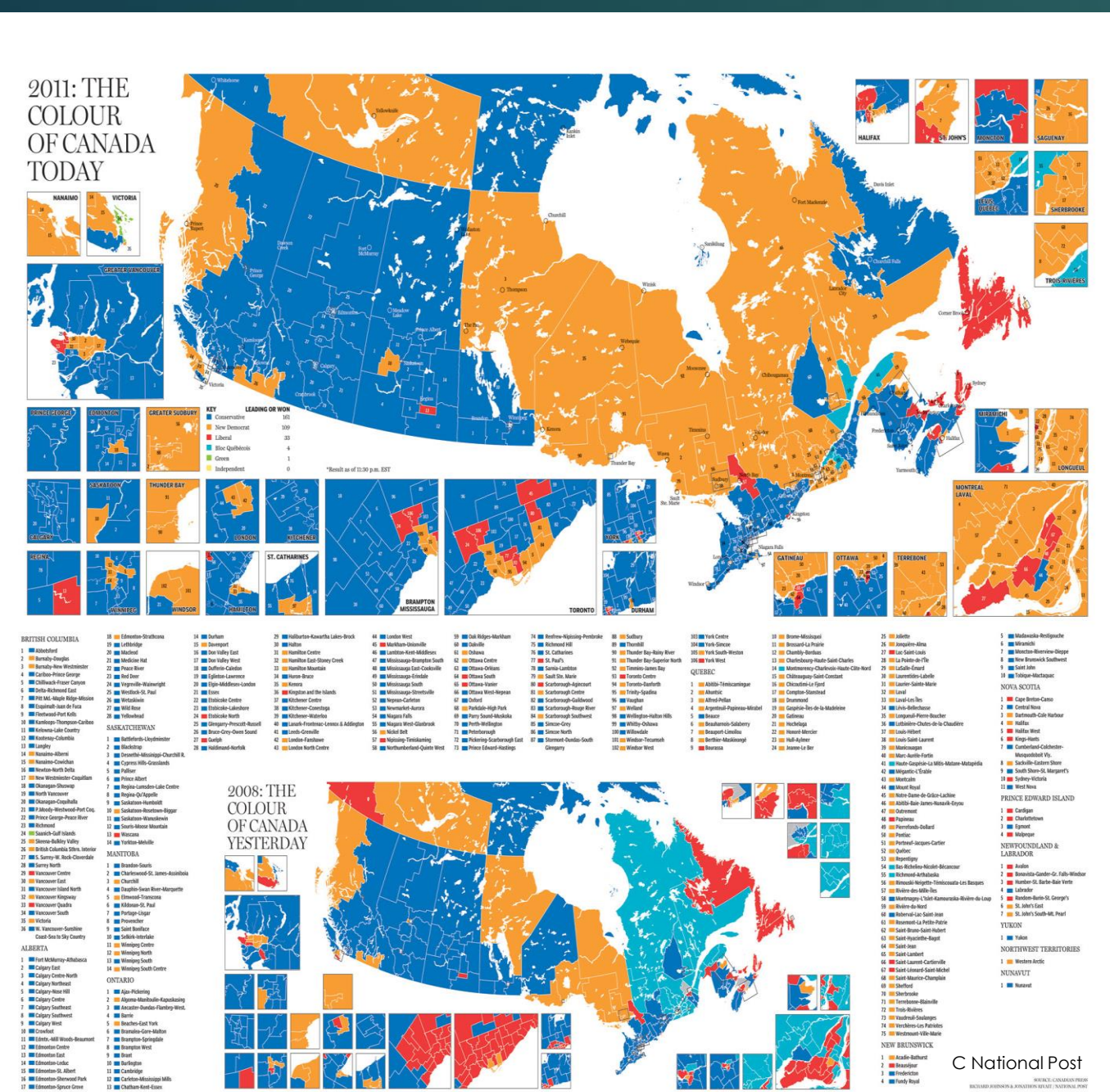
There's just something about beer and Canadian politicians.

WHO GIVES? CONSEQUENCES OF CAMPAIGN FINANCING

1. It differs from province to province, Quebecers give more money on average than Newfoundland voters.
2. Upper class, white, male individuals are more likely to donate to political parties
3. This leads us to the question, "Can the voices of people on the lower rung of the socio-economic scale influence politicians if they lack the clout of capital?"
4. Research has shown that it is more beneficial to get large sums of money from a few than smaller sums from many (see difference between NDP and Conservatives).
5. Nearly 50% of sitting MP's come from a law, business or media background.



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BACKGROUND

Canadian federal elections had loose regulations on campaign financing. It was often shrouded in secrecy; no one knows who donated, how much was donated and who got the money.. The aftermath of Watergate forced changes in 1974 including laws on disclosure and a national subsidy for parties. However, the sponsorship scandal of 2005 lead to the passage of the Federal Accountability Act which included limits on donation and spending, and banning organizations from donating. Currently, the national subsidy for parties is being phased out (by 2015).