Contextualizing Results from the 2024 Afghan Canadian Community Survey

Report Version: 10 March, 2025

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About GLOCAL

GLOCAL is a national non-profit organization committed to promoting digital civic engagement through local participation and global awareness in Canada. We reimagine civic engagement accessibility and inclusivity, and empower Canadian youth to be active participants in their communities rather than passive recipients of civic education.

At GLOCAL, we create a talent incubator through online volunteering, microgrants, mentorship, and work opportunities. This hands-on approach allows youth to engage in the critical “last-mile delivery” of civic information, fostering ownership, leadership, and social entrepreneurship while nurturing a sense of belonging.

The term “GLOCAL” blends “global” and “local,” reflecting our commitment to addressing public concerns through a dual lens. Our approach encourages creative problem-solving that respects local community needs while embracing global perspectives.

Through digital initiatives and community outreach, GLOCAL improves the infrastructure and accessibility of public information, combating misinformation and information overload. By equipping youth with the necessary tools, resources, and opportunities, we cultivate a generation of informed, engaged, and empowered citizens prepared to navigate and address the complexities of our interconnected world.

Land Acknowledgement

As an organization founded upon land that is known today as Vancouver, GLOCAL respectfully acknowledges that we are gathered on the unceded, ancestral, and traditional territories of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the lands of the Musqueam (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm), Squamish (Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw), and Tsleil-Waututh (səlilwətaɬ) Nations.

Our members are located on the traditional territories of many Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island. These include the Algonquin people (Omàmiwininì) in Ontario and Québec; the unceded territory of the Mi’kmaq people, Mi’kma’ki, in Atlantic Canada; Métis, Plains Cree (nehiyawak), Woodland Cree (sakâwiyiniwak) and Swampy Cree (maskêkowiyiniwak) Nations across the prairie regions and eastern Canada; and the Blackfoot Confederacy (including the Kainai, Siksika, and Piikani First Nations), the Tsuut’ina First Nation, the îethka (Stoney) Nakoda Nations (including Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Goodstoney First Nations), and the Métis Government in Alberta.

As persons located across Canada, we recognize the privilege we have to live, work, and learn on these lands. We express our deep gratitude to the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, and we commit to building respectful relationships that honour their past, present, and future contributions to this land. GLOCAL also acknowledges the ongoing impacts of colonialism and the responsibility we have to support Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination.

Background

Since 2019, GLOCAL has been committed to strengthening and empowering civic communities by providing accessible information to the public as well as to the representatives that govern the public. The Afghan Canadian Community Survey (ACCS) was born out of this commitment. By describing the Afghan community in Canada and amplifying the voices of Afghans in Canada, who we also refer to as Afghan Canadians, the ACCS aims to provide a clear window into how Afghans experience life in Canada. Following up on our previous report on the Afghan Canadian community, this report further contextualizes our initial findings on the Afghan Canadian community, providing unprecedented detail on this growing population. For readers interested in our first report on the Afghan community in Canada, it can be found at https://glocalfoundation.ca/afghan-canadian-community.

Data Quality

To ensure ACCS data quality, respondents were required to complete the survey and were able to refuse to answer any question not used to validate respondents' survey eligibility. To minimize survey attrition, respondents could leave open-response questions blank or make use of the "Don't know" and "Prefer not to answer" response options. If the respondent did not respond to a question or a component of a question, their response to that question was recorded as NA. To reduce survey response bias, the order of response options for most questions on the ACCS was randomized. For some questions, survey response options designed to mitigate social desirability bias were also included.

Methodology

The 2024 edition of the ACCS collected individual-level data from June 5 to August 13 through a combination of non-random online, phone, and in-person surveying. All survey responses were recorded using a survey instrument constructed in SurveyMonkey, procuring a sample of 533 complete responses. Survey respondents needed to live in Canada, be of legal working age, and identify as Afghan. Respondents were also required to consent to the terms of participation before beginning the survey or, if under 18 years of age, were required to obtain the consent of a parent or legal guardian. To incentivize responses, eligible survey respondents were offered the opportunity to participate in a skill-based contest to win 1 of 10 gift cards valued at 100 Canadian dollars.

As a follow-up to our first report on the ACCS, this report leverages comparisons with the 2021 Canadian Election Study (Stephenson et al., 2022), commonly referred to as the CES. These comparisons enable a clearer understanding of how Afghan Canadians compare to Canadians overall. Due to the large sample size of the 2021 Canadian Election Study (n = 20,868), this report frequently compares our sample of Afghan Canadians to CES respondents born in Canada as well as CES respondents born outside Canada, allowing for new insights into how the Afghan Canadian community—which is currently composed primarily of persons born outside Canada[1]—is similar to and different from Canadians born in Canada as well as the broader population of immigrants.

[1] Approximately 9 in 10 Afghan Canadians from the ACCS (91.9%).

Given the possibility that the composition of the Afghan community in Canada has significantly changed since the most recent Canadian census, we report aggregate results from the ACCS without applying census-based survey weights. Survey weights are applied to results derived from the CES, however, and we apply the weights that are supplied by the CES dataset whenever they are applicable. The survey weights applied to results derived from the CES depends on the time at which the survey item was supplied to respondents, with some survey items being shown to CES respondents prior to the 2021 federal election and other items being shown to CES respondents after the election.

In addition to simple comparisons between CES and ACCS respondents, this report also includes visualizations of results derived from a series of Poisson, logistic, and multinomial regression models. These advanced statistical models allow for an even deeper level of insight into the Afghan community in Canada by predicting how factors like education, citizenship, and gender identity influence outcomes ranging from homeownership to mental health or satisfaction with Canadian democracy. Though this report cannot contain the entirety of the results derived from these regression models, we have curated this report to include the findings that we consider most interesting or important for our readers to know.[2] Like all survey research, this report assumes that responses from the CES and ACCS are both accurate and reflective of the respective populations they aim to represent. To estimate our uncertainty regarding results derived from either the CES or ACCS, statistics are paired with 95% confidence intervals.

Executive Summary

Demographics[3]

- According to our sample, Afghan Canadians are on average around 15 years younger than other Canadians.
- About one-fourth of Afghan Canadian respondents are citizens, and the majority have come to Canada after 2021.
- A majority (60%) of our respondents live in Ontario, the most populous province in Canada, though our sample may underestimate the number of Afghan Canadians living in other provinces, such as British Columbia.

Income and Asset Ownership

[2] The assumptions of logistic, Poisson, and multinomial regression apply throughout this report. One assumption made by these regression models is that predictive variables are taken to be independent of one another. This means variables within these models may exert unobserved indirect effects and that estimates are of direct effects only. For more information on regression, see Gordon (2015).

[3] Contrary to our expectations, gender frequently fell short of statistical significance in our regression models. In other instances, gender is a statistically significant factor, yet this significance is not reflected in predictive models that estimate the actual probabilities of various outcomes. Gender's lack of practical significance in our predictions is ultimately attributable to variation among the experiences of individuals who identify as a given gender identity, and additional research is needed to better understand the (sometimes subtle) role of gender in influencing social outcomes.

- On average, Afghan Canadians in our sample have lower incomes than other Canadians, including those who were born outside of Canada. 56.7% of our sample of Afghan Canadians told us that their annual income was $30,000 or less, only around 2 in 10 of all foreign-born CES respondents (17.9%) reported receiving this much income or less. At the same time, ACCS respondents seldom indicated that they earned more than $60,000 per year (19.3%), compared to around half (57%) of foreign-born CES respondents.
- Afghan Canadians' income is strongly influenced by citizenship status and English proficiency.
    - While Afghan Canadians have a similar level of formal education to the general population of Canadians, they are also more likely to report not having completed primary school. This may be due to the fact that our respondents are on average younger than the average Canadian.
    - In general, citizens are more likely to earn higher incomes and much less likely to report no income than non-citizens.
    - Most Afghan Canadians report that they are proficient in English, which suggests English proficiency itself may not be what causes the difference in income.
- Time in Canada appears to influence the level of asset ownership, which aligns with findings from studies of immigrants in the United States.

Physical and Mental Health

- Compared to other Canadians, Afghan Canadians are more likely to report being in good physical health. The majority of our sample reported being in very good (43.5%) or excellent (24.4%) health.
- The majority of Afghan Canadians (64.8%) report very good to excellent mental health, similarly to other Canadians born in Canada (63.6%) and outside of Canada (69.1%).
- In line with previous research, older respondents are more likely to report better mental health than younger respondents, regardless of ethnic background or place of birth.
- Discrimination appears not to have a unified influence on mental health. There are many reasons for this, including levels of individual psychological resilience.

Canadian Identity and Community

- A majority of our respondents told us that they believe that obeying Canadian laws and institutions, adhering to Canadian norms and values, caring about fellow Canadians and paying one's fair share of taxes is key to being a true Canadian. Interestingly, they were more likely than non-Afghan Canadians to express that having grandparents or parents born in Canada was also important to being truly Canadian.
- Most ACCS respondents express high levels of confidence in Canadian institutions. Feeling like they have no say in politics did not appear to influence the level of satisfaction with democratic institutions.

Our Analysis

Province

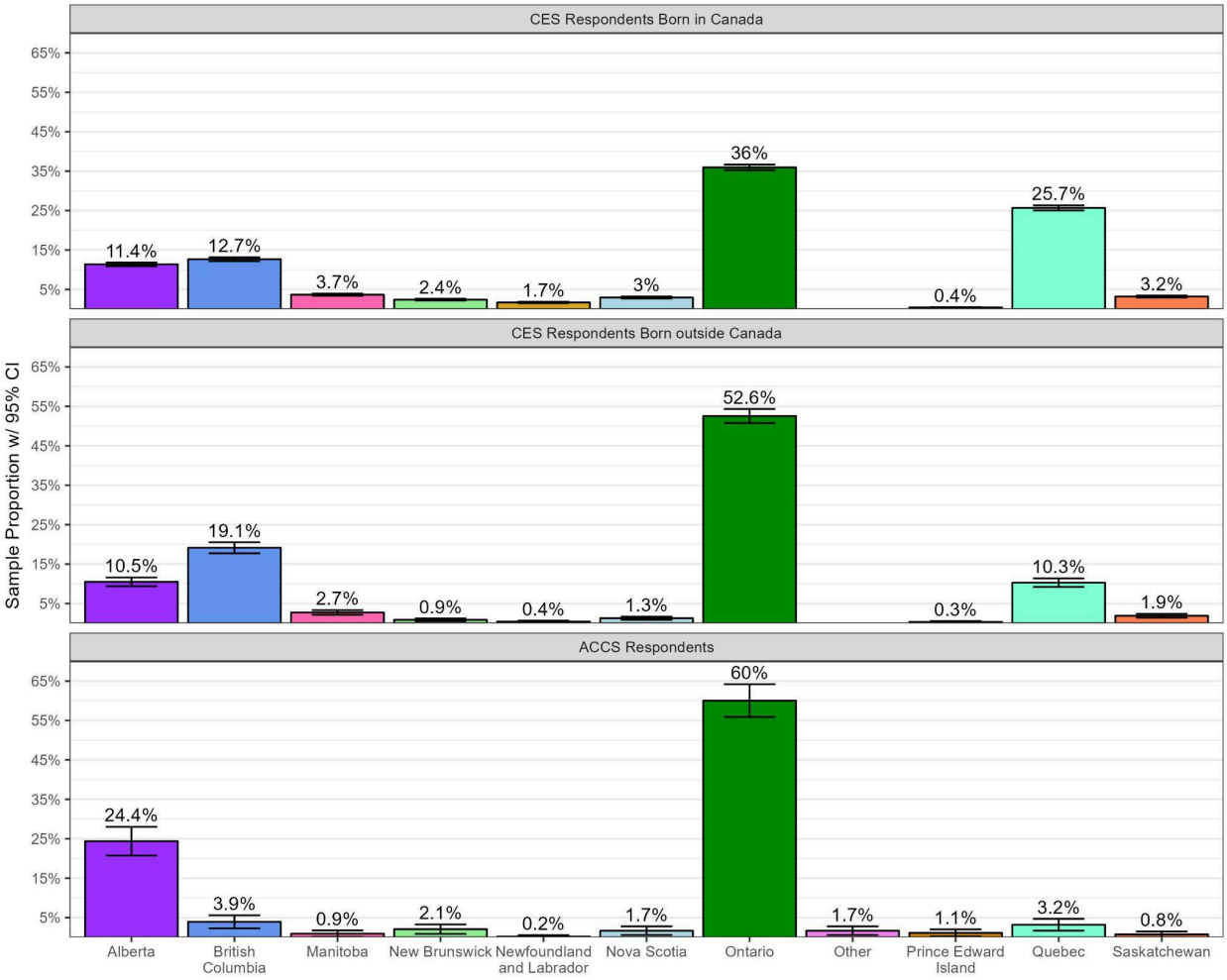

Figure 1. Provincial Identities of CES and ACCS Respondents

Our non-random sample of Afghan Canadians suggests that more than half of this community lives in Ontario (60%), Canada's most populated province. As shown in Figure 1, approximately one-quarter (24.4%) of the Afghan Canadian community appears to live in Alberta, with the remainder of Afghan Canadians living throughout the remainder of Canada's provinces and territories. If these results are accurate, they suggest that Afghan Canadians are uniquely distributed across Canada, reflecting neither CES respondents born in Canada nor those born outside Canada. Results from the 2021 census, though potentially inaccurate by the time that the ACCS was conducted, suggest that our sample of Afghan Canadians may underestimate the proportion of those who are living in either British Columbia or Québec (Statistics Canada, 2023).

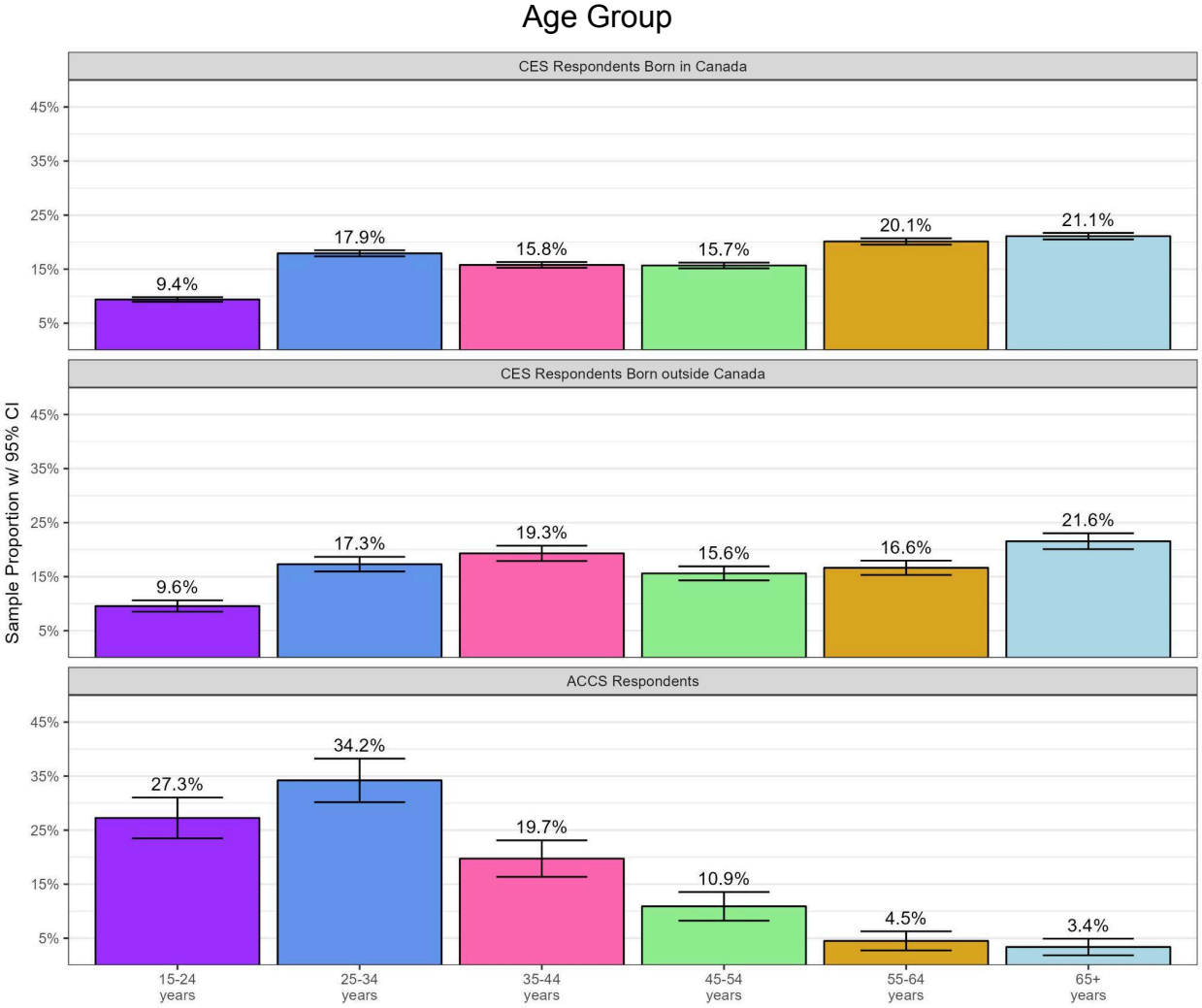

Figure 2. Age Distributions of CES and ACCS Respondents

On average, our evidence suggests the Afghan Canadian community is much younger than most Canadians, regardless of their place of birth. While our sample indicates that 15 to 34-year-olds make up around 6 in 10 members of the Afghan Canadian community (63.6%), nearly the same proportion of CES respondents reported that they were at least 45 years of age (63.1%). Only around 2 in 10 (18.8%) members of the Afghan Canadian community fall into this same broad category. A closer look at CES and ACCS respondents reveals that the average CES respondent is approximately 15 years older than the average ACCS respondent (48.9 years old compared to 34 years old). The age distribution of CES respondents is also greater than that observed among Afghan Canadians, with around two-thirds (68%) of all ACCS respondents falling within 13 years of the sample average. Among CES respondents, around two-thirds of individuals fall within 17 years of the sample average (68%).

Gender

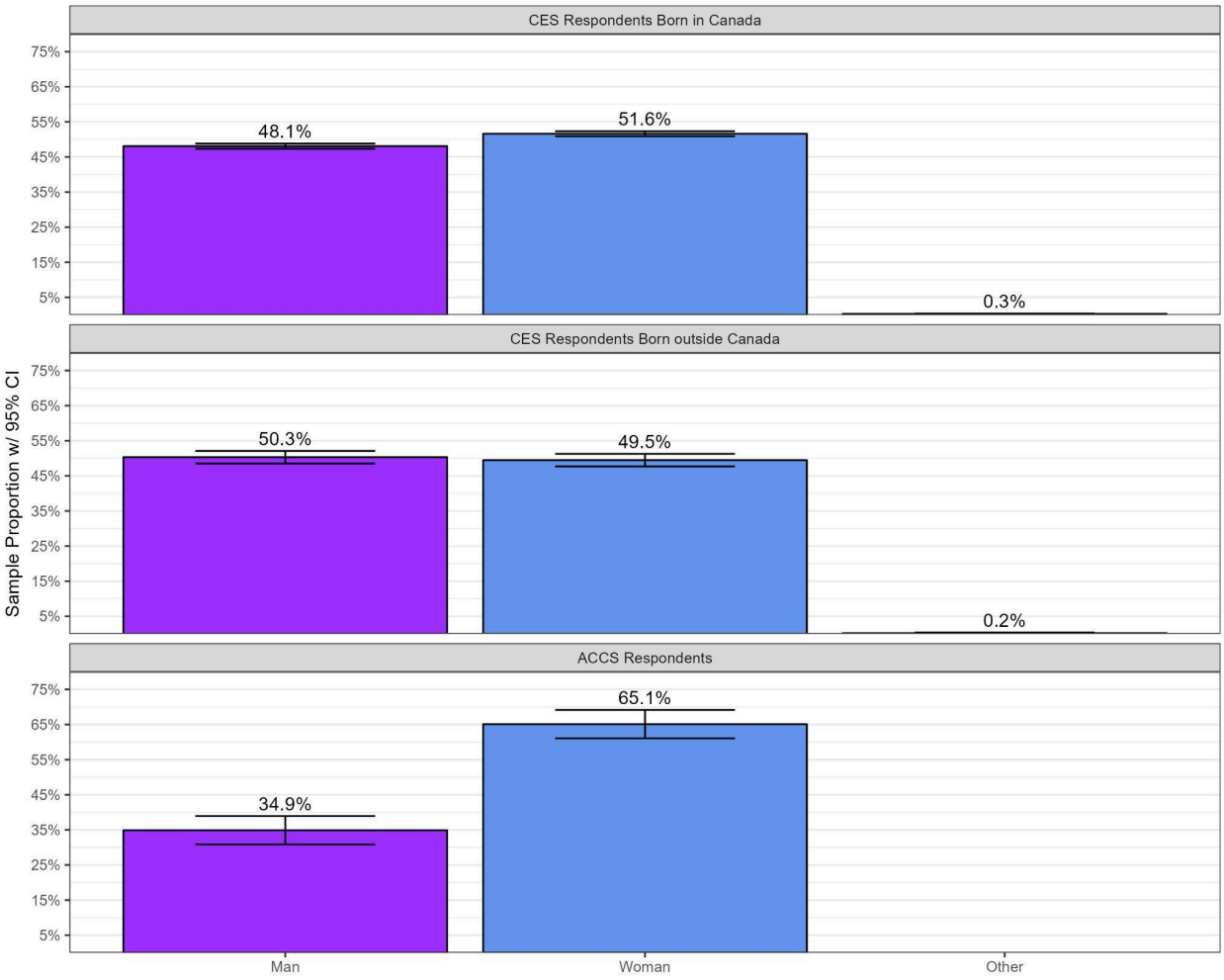

Figure 3. Gender Identities of CES and ACCS Respondents

As indicated in Figure 3, there are significant differences in gender composition when comparing CES and ACCS respondents. Whereas CES respondents were a relatively even split between men and women (48.4% identified as men), Afghan Canadians appear to identify as women approximately twice as frequently as they identify as men (34.9% identified as men). While it remains uncommon for individuals in Canada to identify as anything other than a man or a woman, this phenomenon appears to be even less common among members of the Afghan Canadian community: there were no ACCS responses where an individual identified as something other than a man or a woman when asked about their gender identity. While it is possible that some ACCS respondents do not adhere to a binary conception of gender, it may be that these individuals did not feel comfortable sharing that information when prompted during the survey.

Citizenship

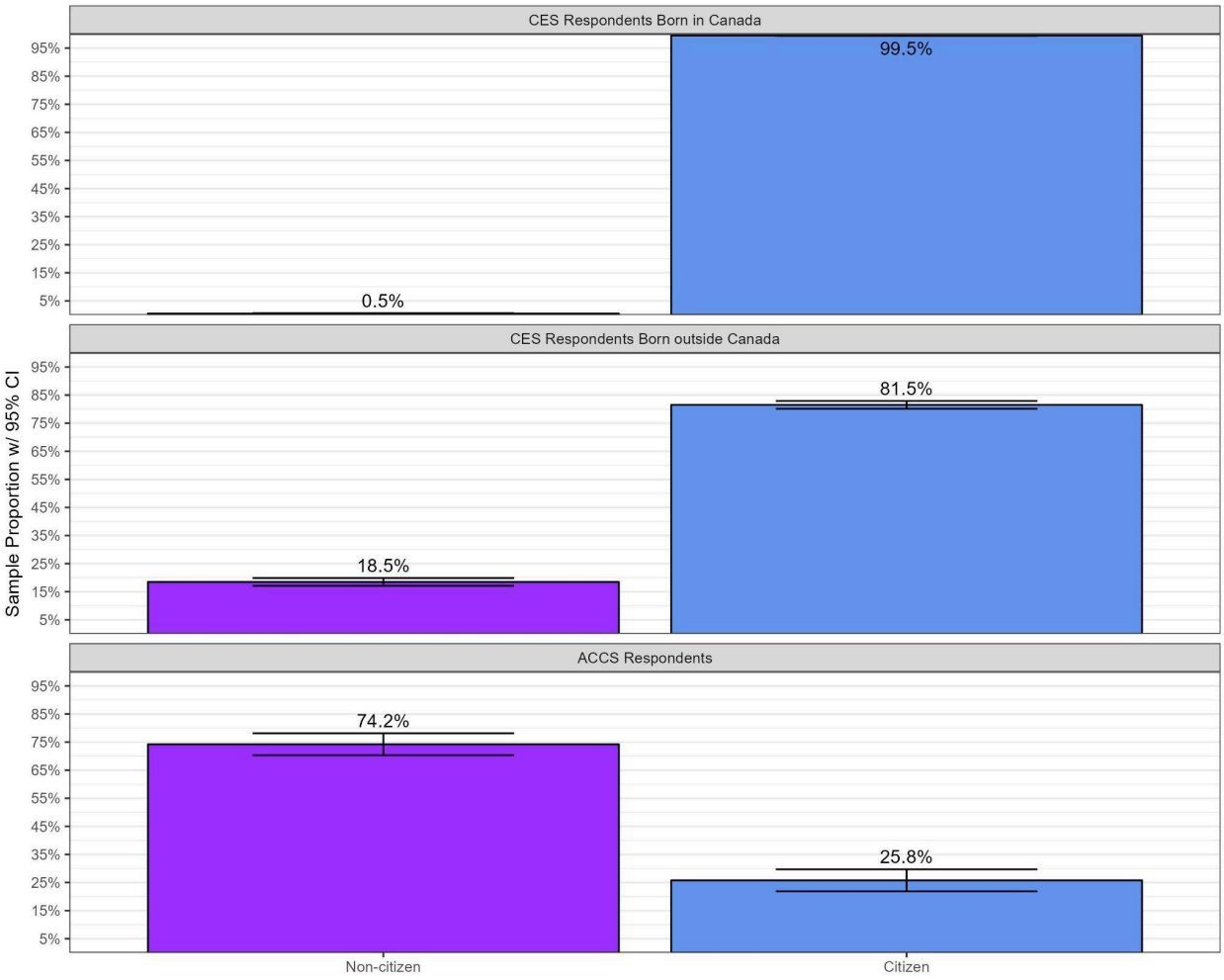

Figure 4. Citizenship of CES and ACCS Respondents

In stark contrast to CES respondents, the vast majority of whom are Canadian citizens (97%), most Afghan Canadians responded to our survey by telling us that they were temporary or permanent residents, with only 1 in 4 (25.8%) Afghan Canadians indicating that they held Canadian citizenship. This makes the Afghan Canadian community an outlier even when compared solely with CES respondents born outside Canada, where 4 in 5 (81.5%) reported that they had become Canadian citizens. One significant explanation for this outlier status is that most members of the Afghan Canadian community are relative newcomers to Canada, with more than half of all ACCS respondents (58.2%) having arrived in 2021 or thereafter. In this context, these results suggest that the proportion of Afghan Canadians who are citizens will increase in the coming years.

Education

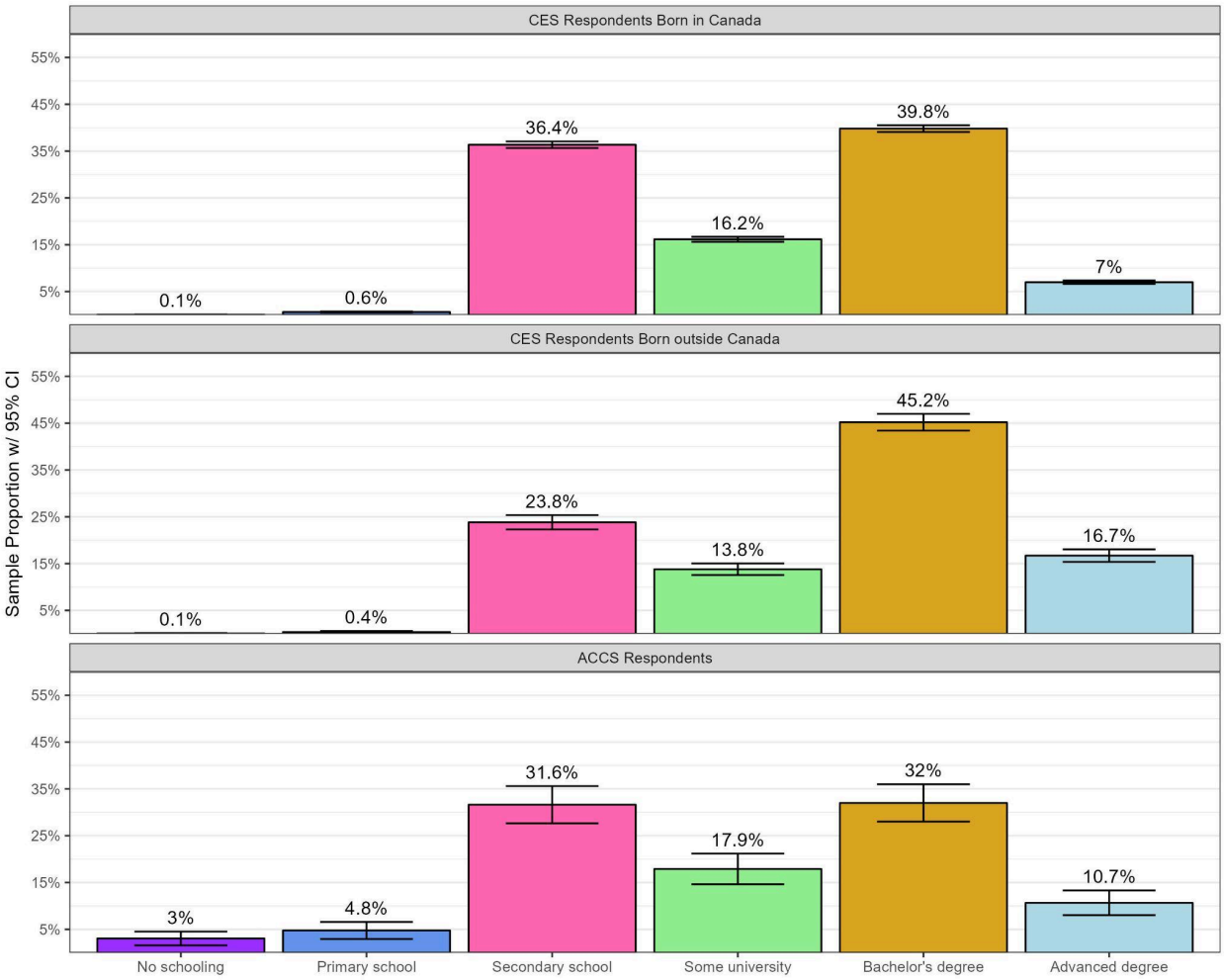

Figure 5. Educational Attainment of CES and ACCS Respondents

With respect to formal education, there are minimal differences between members of the Afghan Canadian community and other Canadians. The most noteworthy difference is that ACCS respondents were more likely than CES respondents to indicate that they had not completed secondary school, with nearly 1 in 10 (7.8%) Afghan Canadians sharing that they possessed no more than a primary education. In large part, this difference may be explained by the relative youth of ACCS respondents compared to CES respondents. At the same time, Afghan Canadians indicated a secondary education (31.8%) or some university (17.9%) approximately as frequently as did CES respondents born in Canada, and it is likely that as the Afghan Canadian population ages, the proportion of Afghan Canadians with a bachelor's degree or higher will increase.

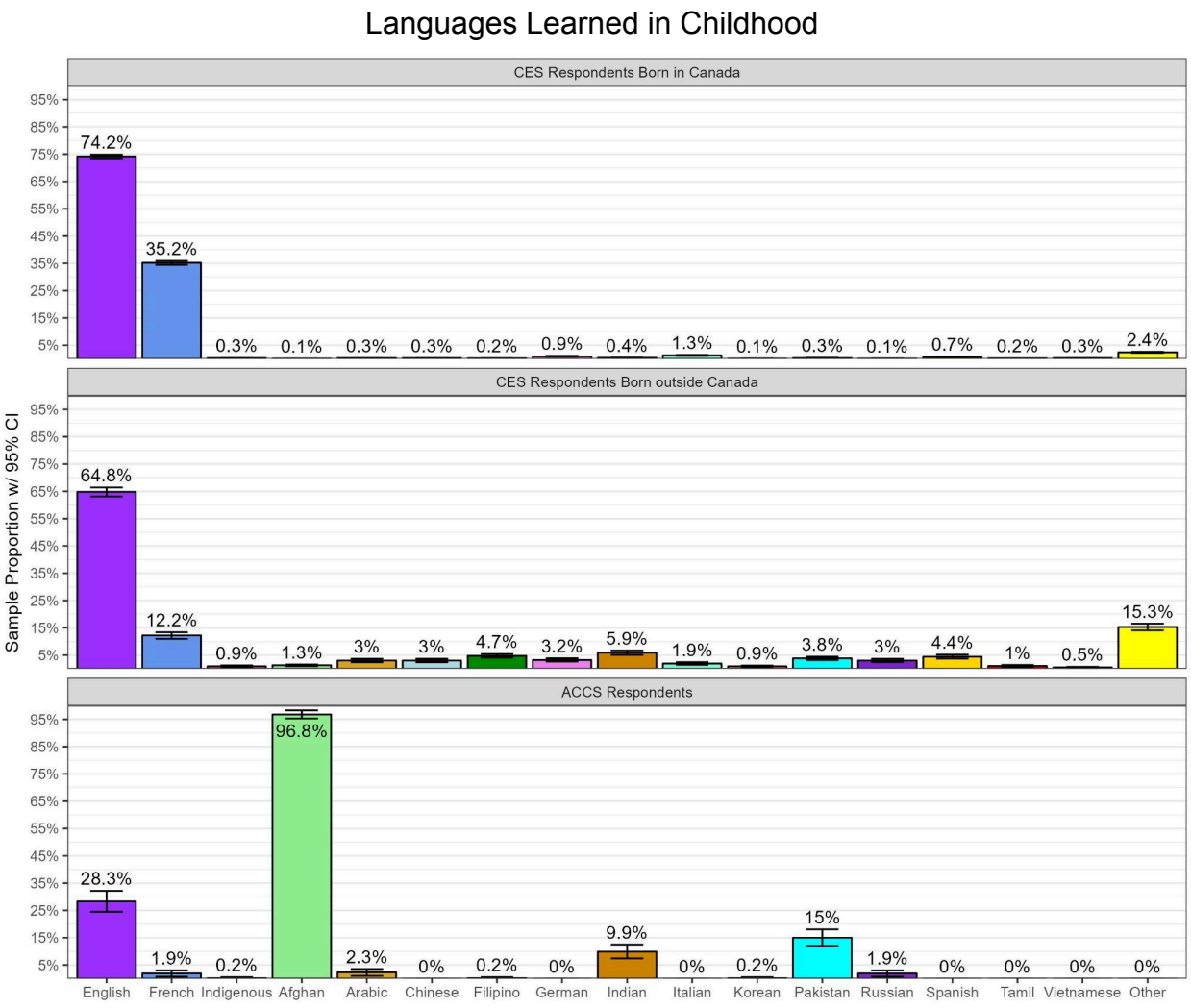

Figure 6. Languages Learned in Childhood by CES and ACCS Respondents

As one might expect, the languages most commonly learned in childhood by Afghan Canadians are those that are native to Afghanistan, with nearly all Afghan Canadians (96.8%) telling us that they learned an Afghan language like Dari or Pashto during their youth. Afghan Canadians also commonly report having learned English (28.3%) or at least one language from India (9.9%) or Pakistan (15%) as a child, and some learned languages like Arabic (2.3%), French (1.9%), or Russian (1.9%). In this sense, Afghan Canadians differ significantly from CES respondents born in or outside of Canada, where learning English or French during one's childhood appears to be commonplace.

Religion

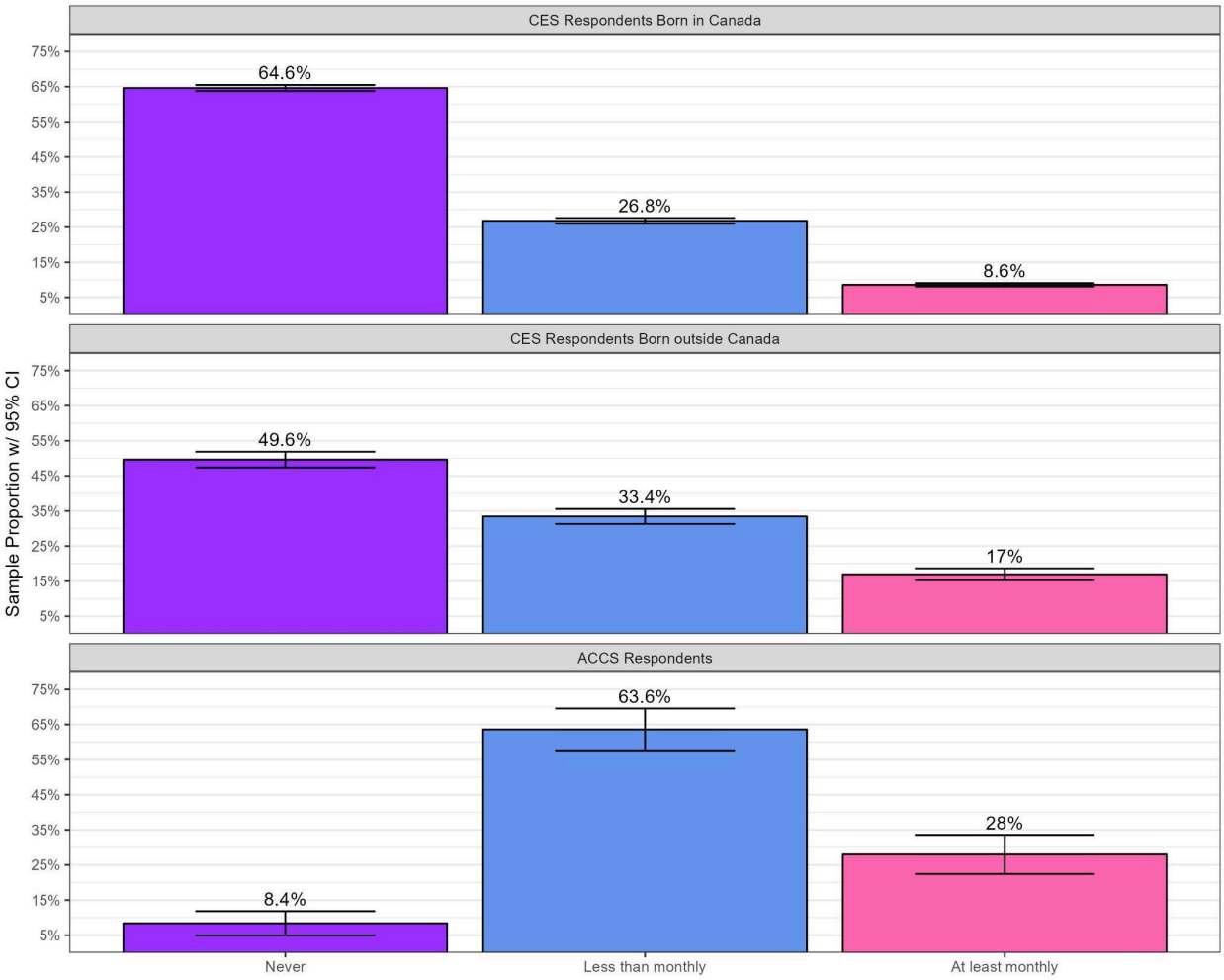

Figure 7. Religious Attendance among CES and ACCS Respondents

As shown in Figure 7, on average, ACCS respondents attend religious gatherings more frequently than do CES respondents, regardless of birthplace. Whereas most CES respondents born in Canada (64.6%) shared with us that they never attend religious gatherings, and around half of all CES respondents born outside Canada (49.6%) told us the same about themselves, only around 1 in 10 (8.4%) ACCS respondents told us they never attend religious gatherings. Moreover, around one quarter (28%) of ACCS respondents shared that they attend religious gatherings once a month or more frequently, far more than is observed among CES respondents overall (9.8%). Overall, these results suggest that Afghan Canadians are more religiously devout than other Canadians.

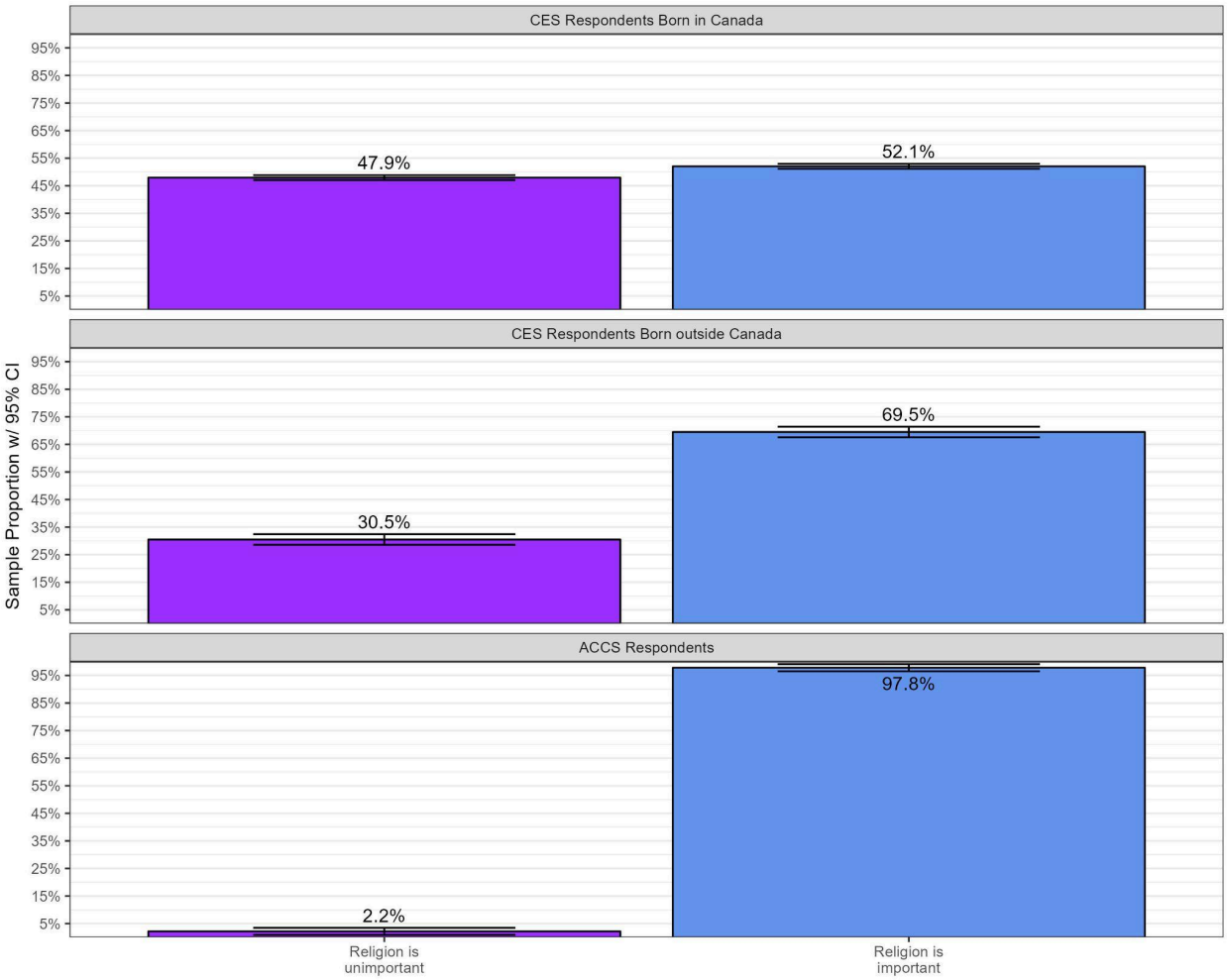

Figure 8. Importance of Religion among CES and ACCS Respondents

Figure 8 lends further credibility to the idea that Afghan Canadians are particularly devoted to religion, with almost all ACCS respondents (97.8%) having told us that religion plays an important role in their daily lives. Just 7 in 10 (69.5%) of foreign-born CES respondents said the same, by comparison. CES respondents born in Canada thought of religion as important even less frequently, with just half (52.1%) having identified religion as important to them. Together, Figure 7 and Figure 8 indicate that so long as Afghan Canadians continue to remain religiously devout, the growth of the Afghan Canadian community may temper the rate of secularization in Canada. Because every ACCS respondent who told us that religion was important also identified themselves as Muslim, it is also likely that the proportion of Canadians who practice Islam will increase alongside this population.

Income

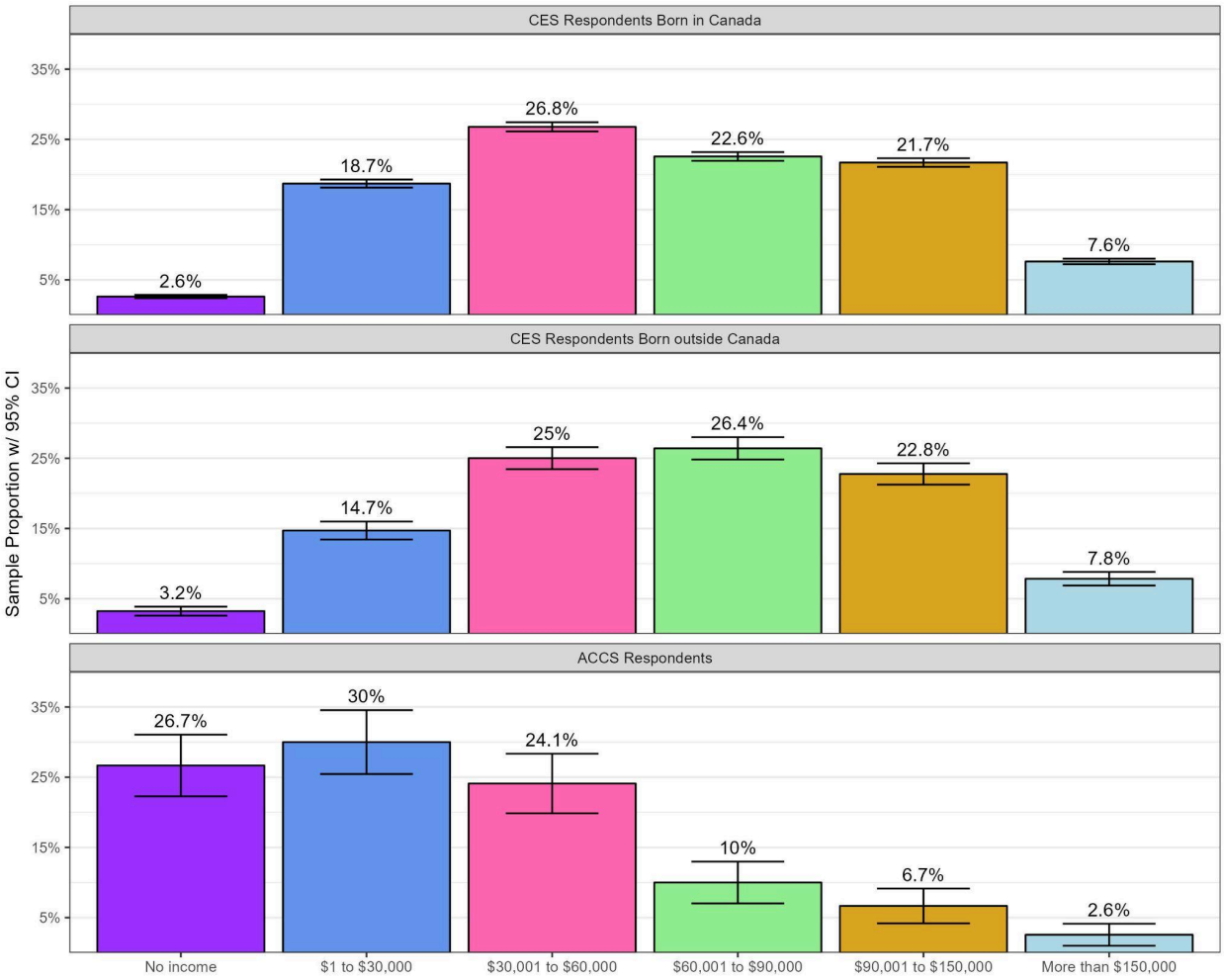

Figure 9. Income Distributions of CES and ACCS Respondents

Turning to look at income, Figure 9 reveals that ACCS respondents typically have much lower income than CES respondents. This remains true even when comparing ACCS respondents only to CES respondents born outside Canada. While approximately half (56.7%) of our sample of Afghan Canadians told us that their annual income was $30,000 or less, only around 2 in 10 of all foreign-born CES respondents (17.9%) reported receiving this much income or less. At the same time, ACCS respondents seldom indicated that they earned more than $60,000 per year (19.3%), compared to around half (57%) of foreign-born CES respondents. Again, the Afghan Canadian community appears to be an outlier, with the gap in income that is revealed by Figure 9 supporting the idea that Afghan Canadians are not as well off as other communities in Canada.

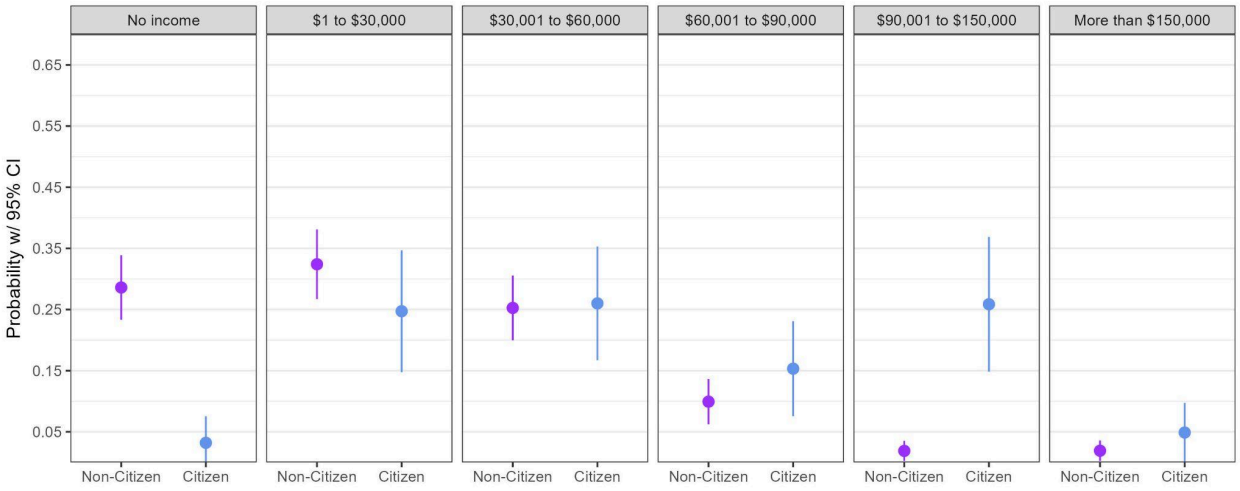

Figure 10. Predicted Probabilities of Income among ACCS Respondents by Citizenship

To better understand what factors might be driving this income discrepancy, a multinomial regression model was constructed to discern the correlates of income among members of the Afghan Canadian community. Such models can effectively estimate how variables like gender or education can influence the probability of belonging to one income bracket over others. From this model—which accounted for citizenship, English proficiency, whether one had undertaken any job training, and whether one lived in Alberta or Ontario—two findings stood out as significant. The first is that income among Afghan Canadians is at least somewhat dependent upon citizenship. As can be observed in Figure 10, the probability of an Afghan Canadian citizen reporting no income is less than 0.05 out of 1, whereas for non-citizens this statistic leaps to 0.29 out of 1. Likewise, Afghan Canadians citizens are approximately ten times as likely as non-citizens to earn an annual income between $90,001 and $150,000. Together, these statistics suggest that citizenship is a major obstacle to earning a higher income for members of the Afghan Canadian community, and it may be that the average income of this community will rise as more Afghan Canadians gain citizenship.

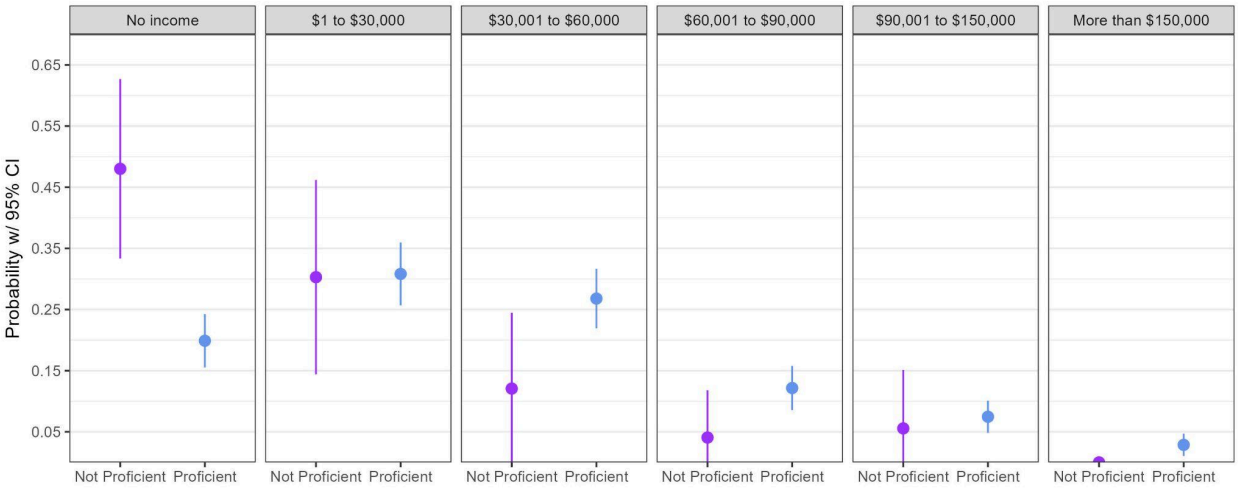

Figure 11. Predicted Probabilities of Income among ACCS Respondents by English Proficiency

Our second noteworthy finding is that English proficiency may also have a substantial influence on the income earned by Afghan Canadians. Among those who report being proficient in English, the probability of having no income is approximately 0.20 out of 1, compared with a probability of 0.48 out of 1 among Afghan Canadians who report not being proficient in English. Figure 11 corroborates these claims while also suggesting that Afghan Canadians proficient in English have at least a low probability (0.03 out of 1) of earning more than $150,000 per year. Afghan Canadians who are not proficient in English, by comparison, are extremely unlikely to belong to the same income bracket. Fortunately, our sample indicates that around 9 in 10 Afghan Canadians are proficient in English, which suggests that while a lack of English proficiency may pose a theoretical obstacle to earning a higher annual income, in practice this obstacle is not significantly hindering the income-earning potential of many within the Afghan Canadian community.[4]

[4] It is possible that our results here are influenced by selection bias, such that it was almost entirely Afghan Canadians who were proficient in English that chose to take part in our survey. If this is the case, we are understating the obstacle posed by English proficiency to earning higher levels of income. This seems unlikely, however, given that we also received more than 100 responses from participants who completed the survey in Dari or Pashto, and these individuals also overwhelmingly told us that they were proficient in English. We do not suggest that English proficiency guarantees a higher level of income, and we recognize that English proficiency may not alter an individual's lived experiences with discrimination as they relate to income or other aspects of daily life.

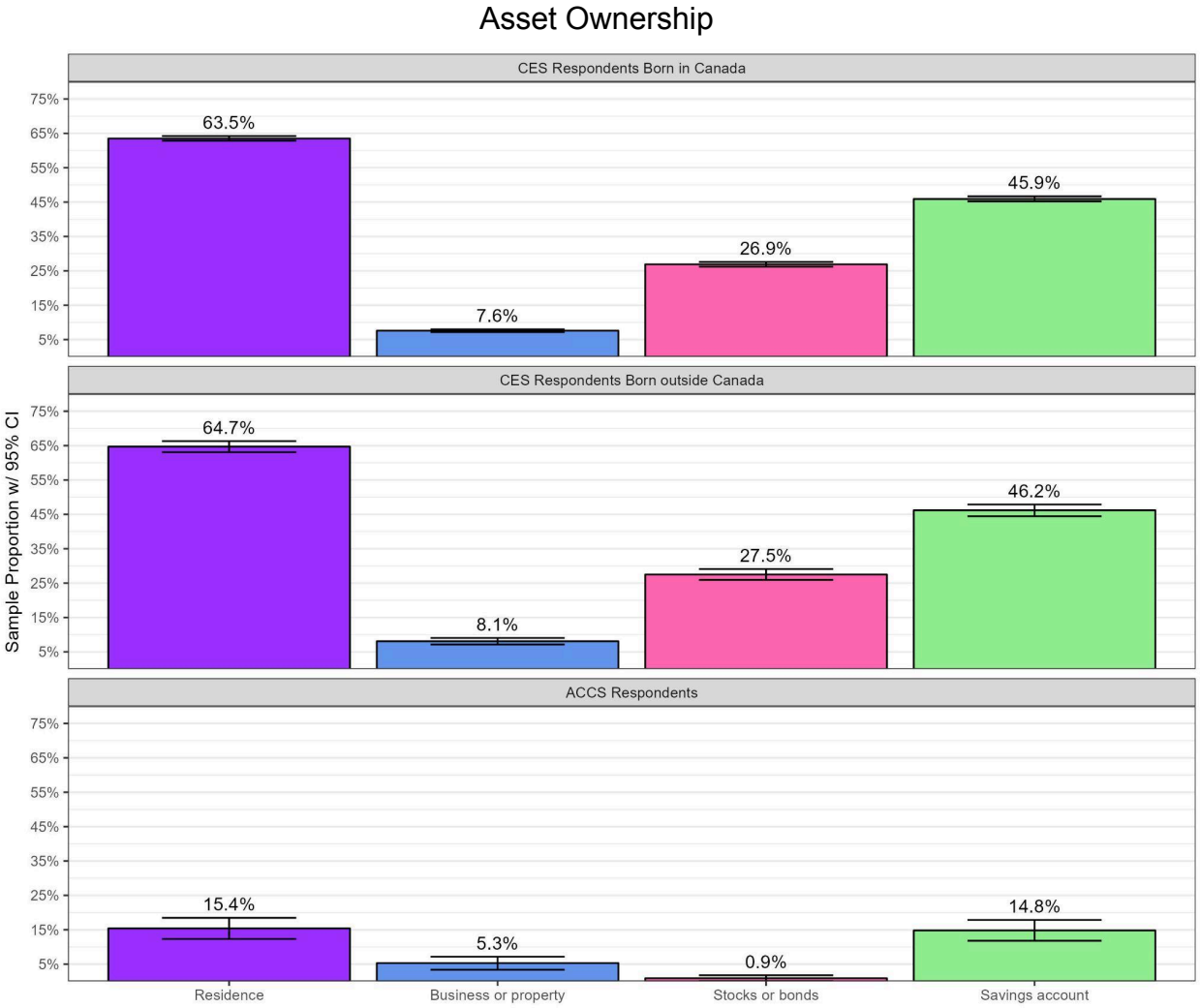

Figure 12. Asset Ownership among CES and ACCS Respondents

Given that our sample indicates Afghan Canadians typically earn a lower income than other Canadians, it is not surprising that very few report owning financial assets such as a residence (15.4%), a business or property (5.3%), or a savings account (14.8%). More surprising is that Afghan Canadians almost never invest in stocks or bonds (0.9%), perhaps because of a combination of lower income and the speculative risk involved with such forms of investment.[5] Sharply contrasting with our sample of Afghan Canadians are the experiences of CES respondents, who more often than not own a residence and who commonly possess either stocks, bonds, or a savings account.

[5] If speculation about the risks surrounding stocks and bonds is driving the apparent dearth of investment in these assets among Afghan Canadians, this result would be consistent with previous research by Chatterjee and Zahirovic-Herbert (2012), who found that recent immigrants to high-income countries are unlikely to engage in such investments. This risk calculation is mediated by income precarity and individual risk tolerance (Chatterjee & Zahirovic-Herbert, 2012).

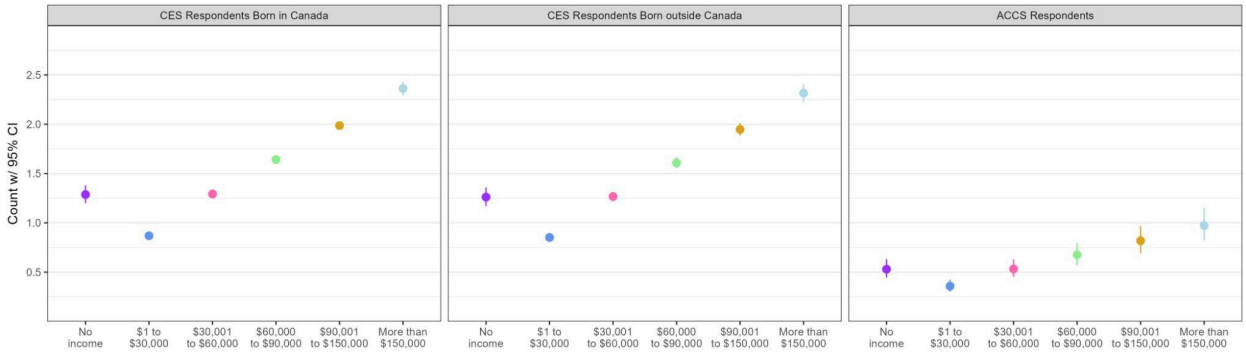

Figure 13. Predicted Number of Assets among CES and ACCS Respondents by Income

To dive more deeply into the factors that may facilitate or hinder asset ownership among Afghan Canadians, we constructed a Poisson regression model that predicted how many types of assets one owns as a function of citizenship, age, gender, income, and whether one reported living in Alberta, Ontario, or Québec. Because these are variables that are also asked about in the CES, we included CES respondents in this model and distinguished between CES respondents by whether they were born in Canada. Upon looking at the results of our predictive model, it appears that the variable most strongly influencing asset ownership is income, as is reflected in Figure 13 above.

Yet the influence of income on asset ownership does not appear to be the same for ACCS respondents as it is for CES respondents. For CES respondents, an individual moving from the second-lowest income bracket to the highest income bracket is predicted to have gained between one and two new types of assets during this process. In contrast, ACCS respondents at the highest income bracket are predicted to have one type of asset on average. While it is fair to say that the number of asset types one owns does not directly indicate overall asset ownership—an individual who owns one residence and an individual who owns four residences both possess one type of asset—a lack of asset diversification could represent a disadvantage via greater exposure to risk (Markowitz, 1952).[6] This model also suggests that beyond income and the variables listed above, there is another factor that hinders asset ownership among Afghan Canadians.

[6] Previous research has found that immigrants who have arrived for a longer period of time tend to hold more real estate wealth and less financial wealth compared to recent immigrants (Cobb-Clark & Hildebrand, 2006). We may observe a similar trend with the Afghan Canadian community in the future, with real estate wealth increasing as they become more established in Canada.

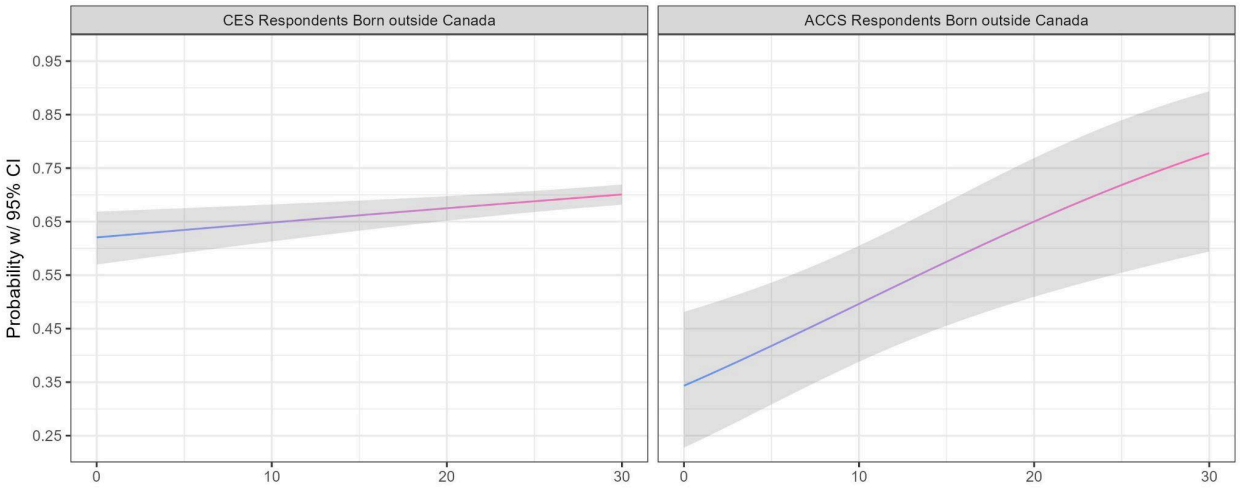

Figure 14. Predicted Probability of Homeownership among CES and ACCS Respondents by Years in Canada

In hopes of uncovering the factors that have contributed to a gap in asset ownership between Afghan Canadians and other Canadians, we narrowed the scope of our analysis to only CES and ACCS respondents who were born outside of Canada, thereby allowing us to consider the impact of variables that do not apply to individuals born within Canada. In addition, we decided to look more closely at homeownership specifically, as homeownership is a strong indicator of entering the middle class. We ran a logistic regression model that predicted the probability of foreign-born Canadians owning a residence by accounting for income, gender, age, citizenship, whether one lived in Alberta, Ontario, or Québec, and how many years one has been living in Canada.

As can be observed in Figure 14, the primary factor contributing to a lack of asset ownership among Afghan Canadians relative to other Canadians in the same income bracket appears to be the amount of time one has lived in Canada. While a member of the Afghan Canadian community who has just arrived in Canada is less likely than another foreign-born individual who has just arrived in Canada to be able to acquire a Canadian residence right away (0.35 out of 1 compared to 0.62 out of 1), according to our model, over time this gap diminishes until foreign-born Afghan Canadians and foreign-born Canadians from elsewhere are approximately as likely to be homeowners. Yet as of 2024, nearly 6 in 10 (58.2%) Afghan Canadians have lived in Canada for no more than three years, according to our sample. In addition, the average time that a foreign-born ACCS respondent has lived in Canada is five years (compared to 29.6 years among foreign-born CES respondents).

Though previous research suggests members of the Afghan Canadian community become more likely to own a home or other assets simply because they have lived in Canada for more time, it does not logically follow that time alone can produce this effect. Furthermore, because our logistic model already accounts for factors like income and citizenship, and we still observe this predicted effect from the number of years spent in Canada, it stands to reason that there remains some other factor which correlates with the number of years spent in Canada that

also differs between Afghan Canadian immigrants and immigrants from elsewhere. In addition, this latent variable cannot be significantly different among non-Afghan Canadians regardless of whether they were born in Canada, as there were no notable differences in asset ownership among immigrant and non-immigrant CES respondents within the same income bracket as seen in Figure 13.

Following this logic, we speculate that the mechanism underlying the apparent effect of time in Canada on the probability of asset ownership (as proxied by homeownership in Figure 14) is whether an individual already has well-established connections in Canada before arriving. Having well-established connections in a country prior to one's arrival can facilitate steps that are necessary to owning a home or other financial assets, as this connection can provide valuable information about the market and the purchasing process. A trusted friend or close family member might even be willing to act as a reference or co-sign on a loan. Because many immigrants who choose to live in Canada do so in part because of connections they have with individuals who already live here (while people born in Canada are connected by default to those who raise them), and many Afghan Canadians did not have existing connections with individuals in Canada prior to arriving here, this lack of established friends or family in Canada is likely a hidden obstacle that Afghan Canadians can only overcome with time.

Figure 15. Physical Health among CES and ACCS Respondents

Pivoting to compare the health of CES and ACCS respondents, Afghan Canadians tend to be in good physical health, with only around 3 in 10 (32.1%) telling us that they were in poor or fair health, compared to the plurality who reported that they were in very good (43.5%) or excellent (24.4%) health. In comparison to CES respondents, ACCS respondents appear to perceive themselves as slightly healthier than those who participated in the CES, with ACCS respondents reporting that they were in excellent physical health (24.4%) around twice as often as CES respondents born in Canada (12.3%) and outside of Canada (11.8%). ACCS respondents were also significantly less likely than CES respondents to indicate they were only in fair health. As there is no universally established scale for what constitutes “excellent” as opposed to “very good” or “fair” health, the differences observed in Figure 15 may partially be the product of differing ideas of what criteria one needs to fill to be considered healthy.

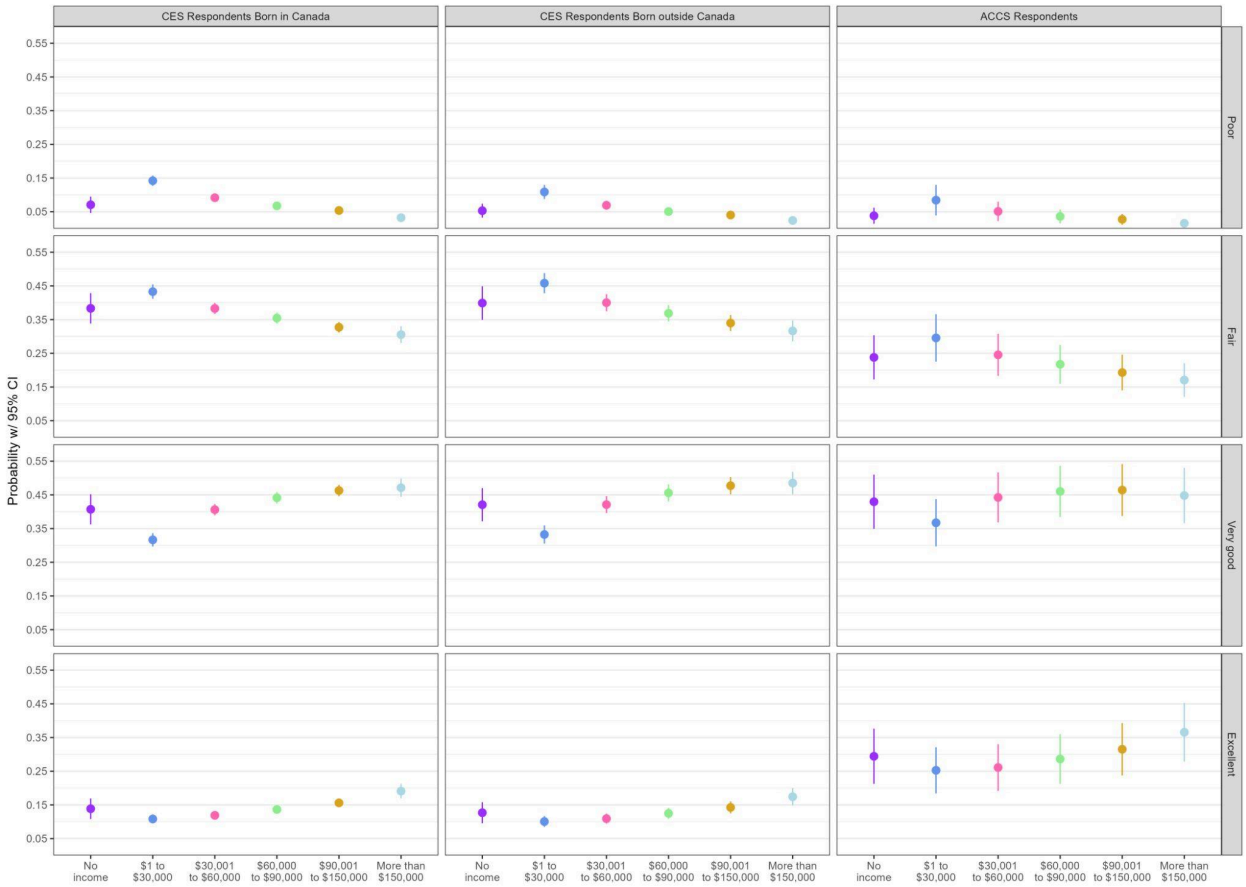

Figure 16. Predicted Probabilities of Physical Health among CES and ACCS Respondents by Income

We ran a multinomial model designed to predict the probability of an individual indicating one level of physical health over others as a function of citizenship, gender, age, income, education, and whether one reports having experienced discrimination while living in Canada. This model identified income as the factor that best predicts physical health among CES and ACCS respondents. Albeit in a roundabout way, this model supports the idea that differences in reported physical health between CES and ACCS respondents are partially due differing conceptions of what is required to be considered healthy. The estimated influence of income on the probabilities of being in poor, fair, very good, or excellent health is therefore depicted in Figure 16 for ACCS respondents as well as CES respondents born in Canada and CES respondents born elsewhere. Careful observation of Figure 16 reveals that although higher income typically lowers the probability of a CES or ACCS respondent indicating that their physical health is poor or fair, neither income nor the other variables including in our model can explain why ACCS respondents in the same income bracket as their CES counterparts consistently have a higher probability of sharing that they are in excellent physical health.

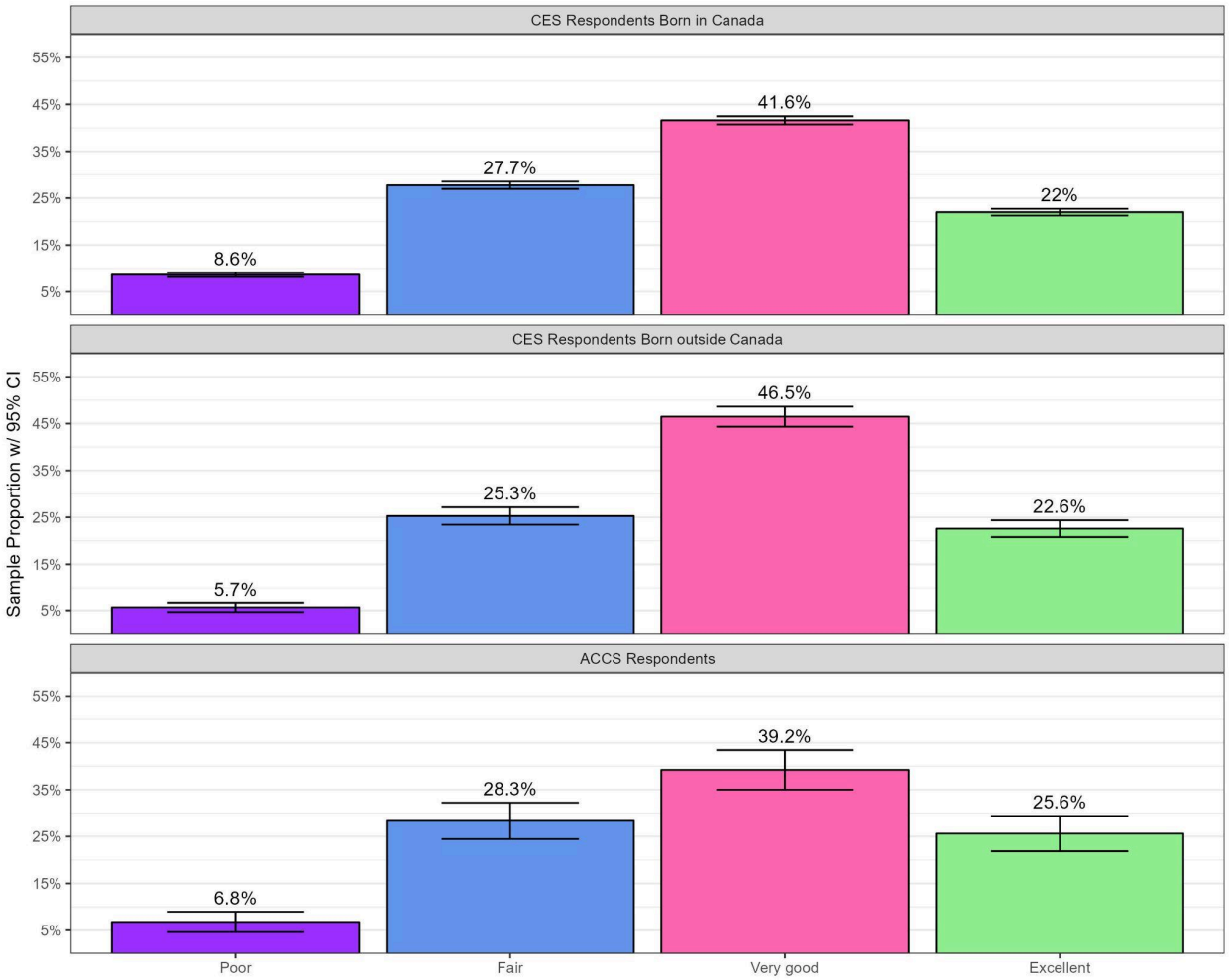

Figure 17. Mental Health among CES and ACCS Respondents

Interestingly, the trend observed among Afghan Canadians with respect to physical health does not translate to mental health. Instead, our sample of Afghan Canadians responded to the survey item asking about their mental health almost exactly as did a more general sample of Canadians who answered the same survey item on the CES. The slight exception to this "rule" is that ACCS respondents reported being in very good mental health (39.2%) somewhat less frequently than did CES respondents born outside Canada (46.5%), with this difference (7.3 percentage points) largely being made up by Afghan Canadians who told us they were in fair or excellent mental health.

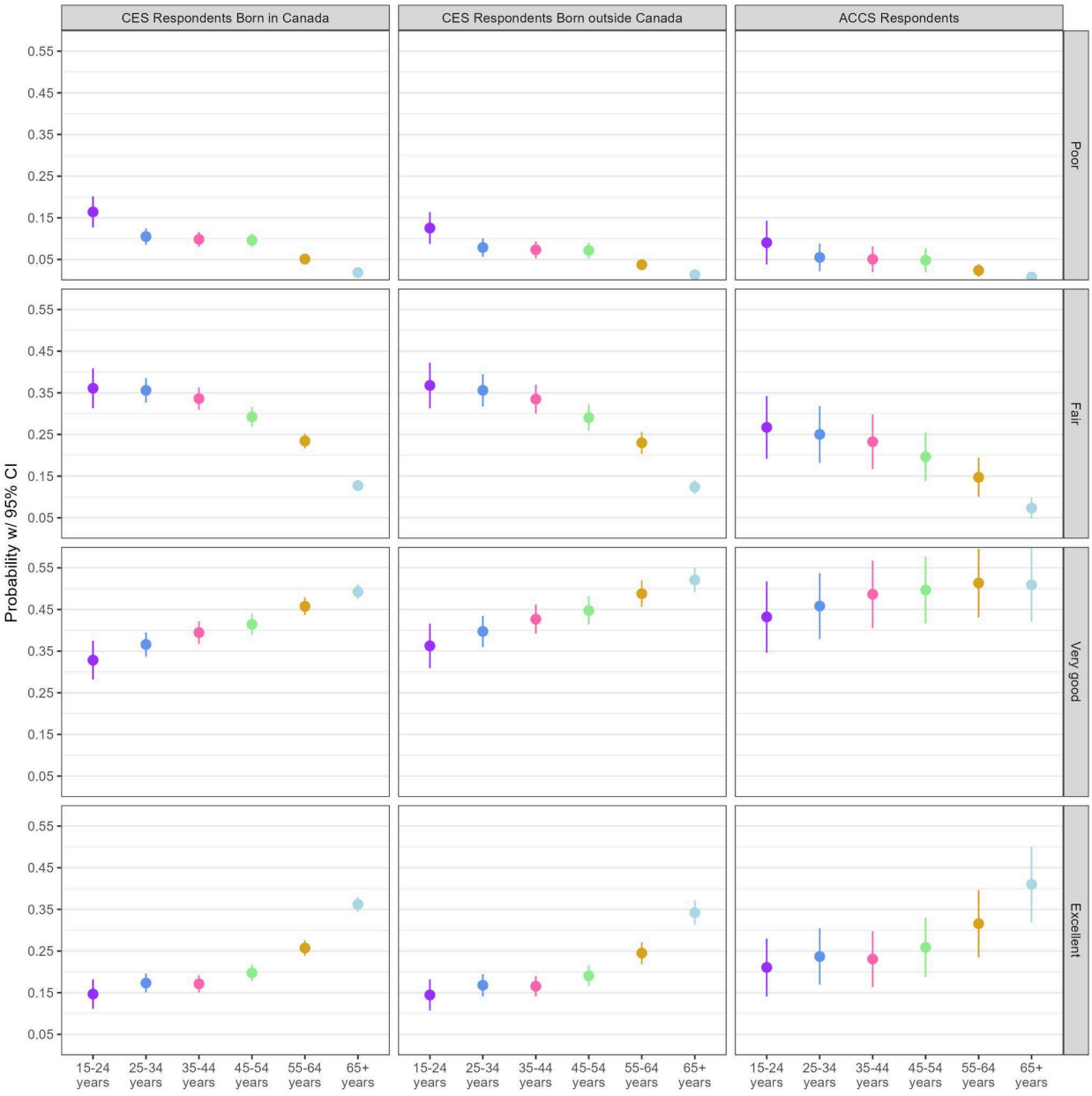

Figure 18. Predicted Probabilities of Mental Health by Age Group

To gain greater insight into the factors that influence the mental health of Afghan Canadians, we reconstructed our previous multinomial model but changed the variable that we were predicting from physical health to mental health. Here, two results stood out as significant. The first result, visualized in Figure 18, is that age is a powerful predictor of mental health. Of course, this is not unique to Afghan Canadians, with age appearing to interact with mental health in the same way regardless of one's ethnic heritage or place of birth. Yet it is worth noting that the relationship between age and mental health is the exact opposite of what some might suspect, with the probability of reporting very good or excellent mental health increasing as one

ages.[7] Given that Afghan Canadians—who were largely born outside Canada—and CES respondents born in Canada both appear to reflect at least a moderately positive relationship between age and mental health, this phenomenon seems to be universal rather than something that is based in a specific cultural or social context.

[7] The relationship between mental health and age is complex, and previous research has found different patterns depending on the stage of life and the specific measures used to examine mental health. Studies such as the General Social Survey and the Berlin Aging Study suggest that people experience increasing levels of happiness, purpose, and life satisfaction as age increases until much later in life, though positive affect (emotions) generally decreases with age (Ferraro & Wilkinson, 2013). According to 2007 data from the National Comorbidity Survey Replication, the prevalence of mental disorders such as anxiety disorders or major depression decreases as people age (Kessler et al., 2010, cited in Ferraro & Wilkinson, 2013). When examining depressive symptoms (including subclinical symptoms) alone, most research has found a U-shaped relationship, with higher rates of depressive symptoms amongst the oldest individuals (80+) and young adults and lower rates among middle-aged adults (Ferraro & Wilkinson, 2013). These results are influenced by a number of different social and psychological factors including ability to cope with stressors, life events, and age-related changes in physical and mental capacities. In general, it appears that previous research is consistent with the results in the ACCS, considering that most ACCS respondents are younger.

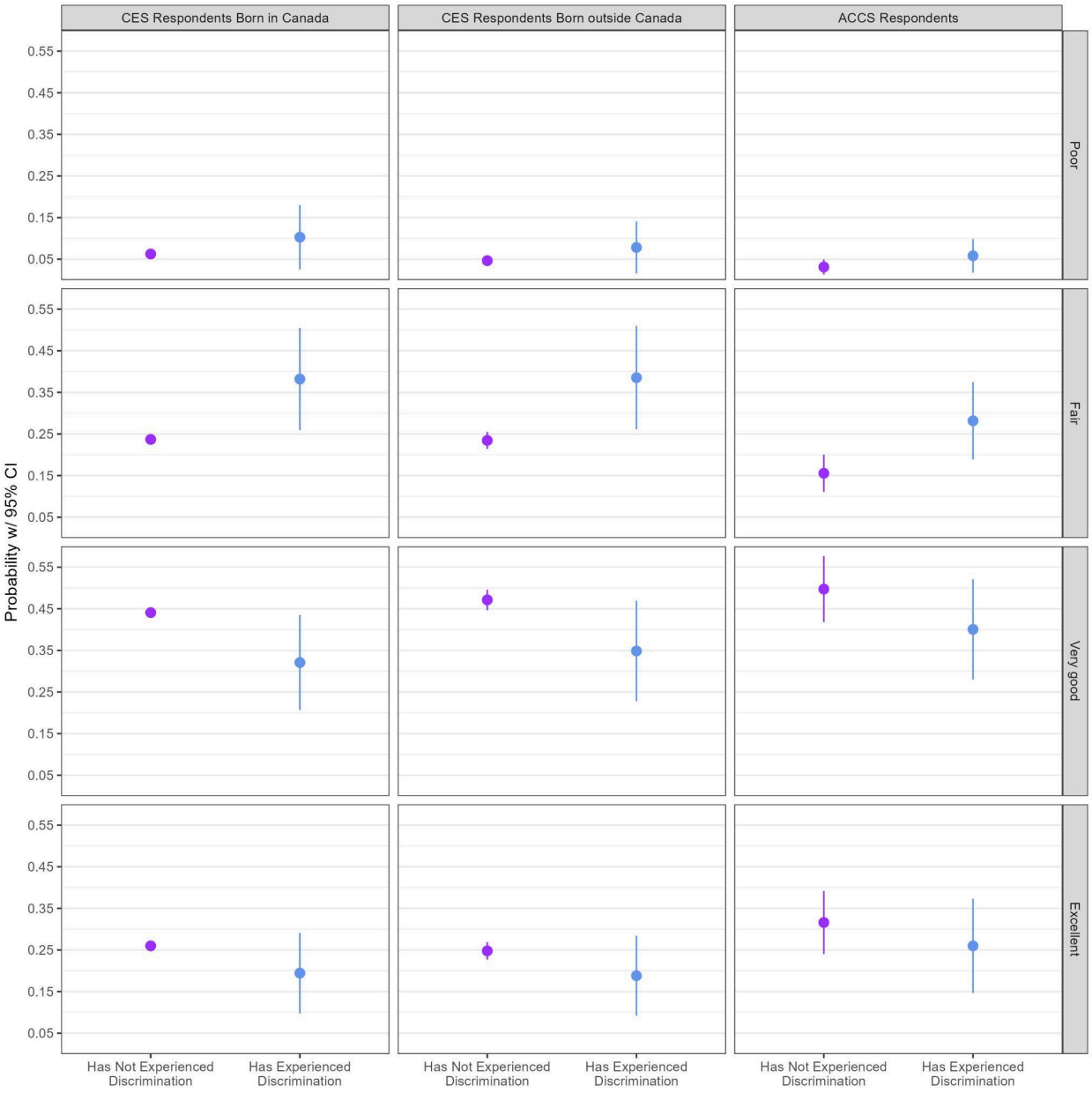

Figure 19. Predicted Probabilities of Mental Health among CES and ACCS Respondents by Experience with Discrimination

Our second noteworthy result with respect to mental health is the apparent influence of discrimination. More specifically, we are surprised to report that it is difficult to confidently claim experiences with discrimination diminish one's mental health. As can be observed in Figure 19, differences among ACCS and CES respondents commonly fall just short of statistical significance.[8] Even so, there is a clear trend wherein individuals who report having experienced discrimination when prompted by either the ACCS or CES also commonly report being of fair

[8] Statistical significance refers to a numerical threshold that researchers typically use to determine whether some discrepancy between two or more groups is meaningful.

rather than very good or excellent mental health. Given this context, the uncertainty surrounding the influence of discrimination on mental health, as represented by the confidence intervals in Figure 19, should be interpreted not as discrimination having no influence on mental health. Rather, it suggests that the way discrimination influences mental health varies widely among the individuals who have been subject to it. The lack of clarity regarding the influence of discrimination on mental health may also be because of factors like the frequency of discrimination that are not accounted for here.

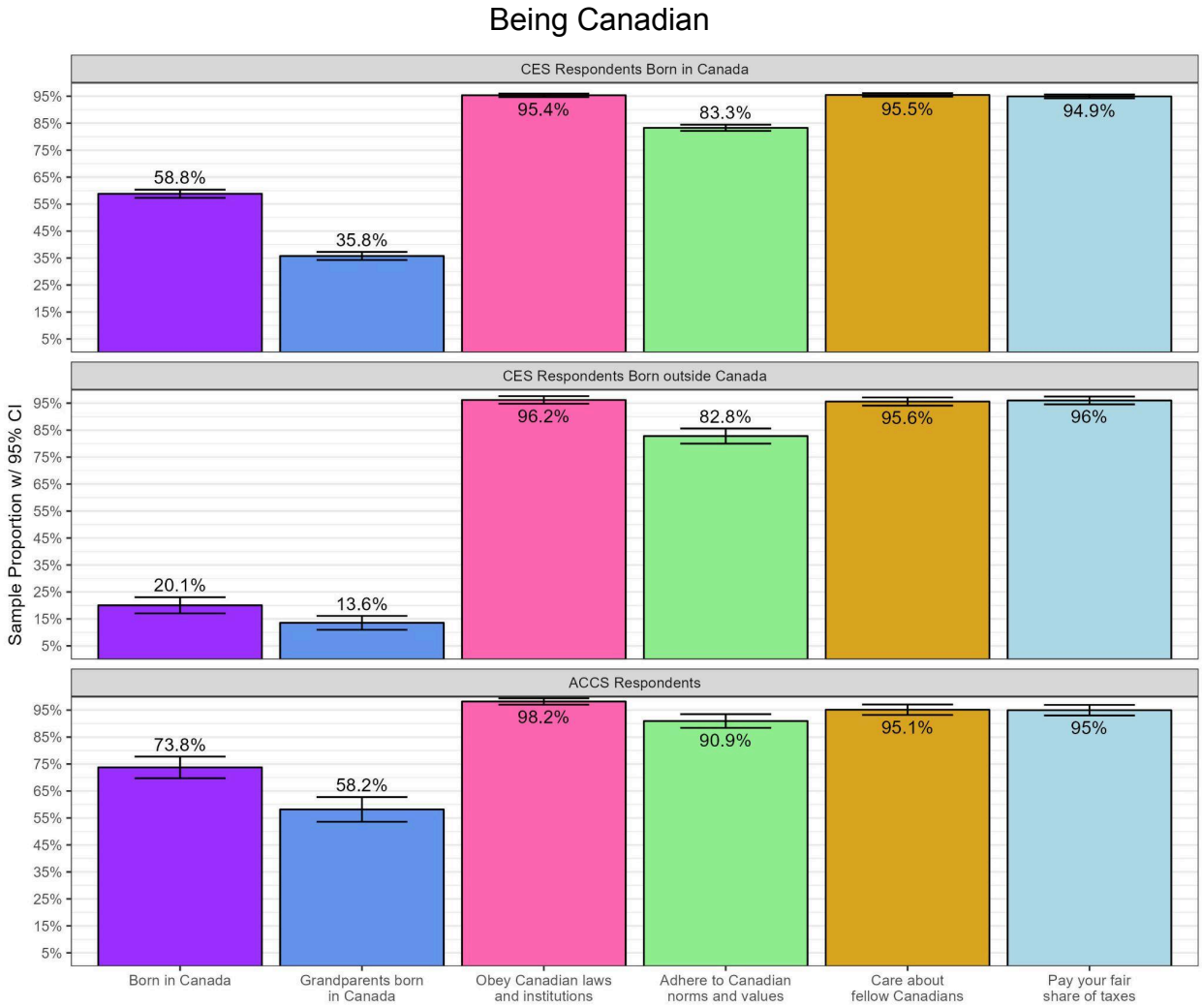

Figure 20. What Makes a True Canadian According to CES and ACCS Respondents

Upon asking ACCS respondents what factors they thought were important to being considered truly Canadian, in many ways their responses were similar to those offered by CES respondents, with virtually all Afghan Canadians in our sample telling us that one must obey Canadian laws and institutions (98.2%), adhere to Canadian norms and values (90.9%), care about fellow Canadians (95.1%), and pay one's fair share of taxes (95%). Yet ACCS

respondents also indicated that they felt being born in Canada (73.8%) or having grandparents born in Canada (58.2%) was an important aspect of being truly Canadian much more frequently than even Canadians who were born in Canada.

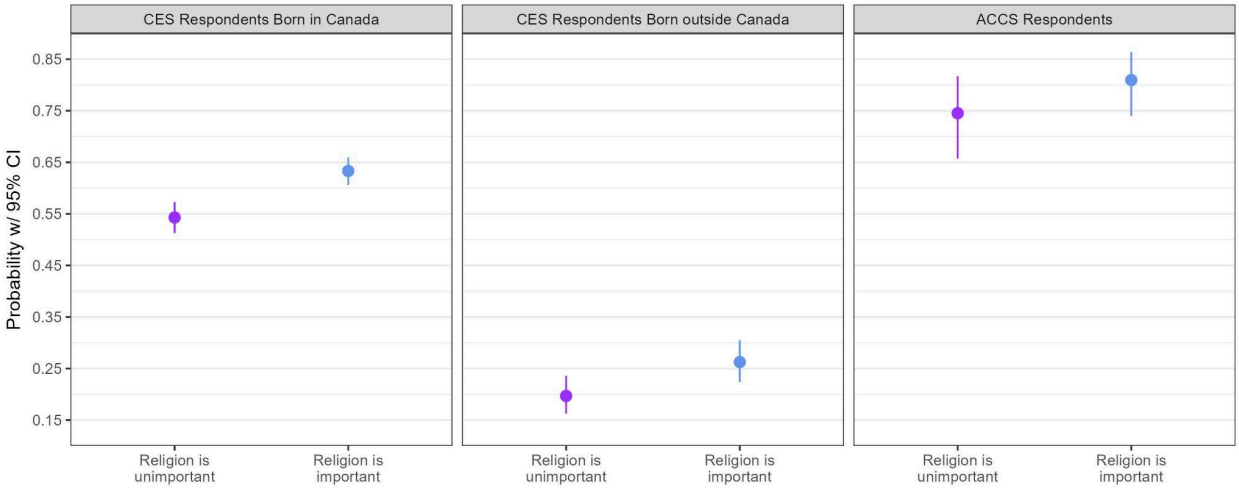

Figure 21. Predicted Probability of Believing Canadian Heritage Makes One Truly Canadian among CES and ACCS Respondents by Religious Importance

Rather than factors like age or income driving this discrepancy between ACCS and CES respondents, we suspect that differences in the frequency with which individuals from each group report a belief that one must have Canadian heritage to be truly Canadian is largely the result of deeper cultural differences regarding what is required to claim belonging of a national identity. In comparison to Canadians born in Canada, who are commonly told that Canada's multicultural identity is something in which one should take pride, Afghan identity has traditionally been rooted partially in kinship and shared genetic lineage. Indirect support for our suspicion can be observed in Figure 21, which depicts the probability of ACCS and CES respondents feeling that heritage makes one truly Canadian based on whether they believe religion is important.[9] If we accept that religion is related to a desire to adhere to tradition, we can then make sense of religious individuals being more likely to believe that heritage is part of what makes one truly Canadian, and by extension of this logic we can see why members of the Afghan Canadian community—who may be socialized around religion and traditional concepts of belonging from birth—may be more likely to see heritage as important even if they are not religious themselves.[10] Still, further research is required to state with any certainty that cultural conceptions of belonging are the primary cause of the discrepancy identified in Figure 20.

[9] The logistic model on which Figure 21 is based also accounts for gender, citizenship, education, income, age, and whether one lived in Alberta, Ontario, or Québec.
[10] Lockhart et al. (2020) differentiate between religious fundamentalism and spirituality, noting that religious fundamentalism is positively associated with moral conservatism and traditionalism while spirituality is negatively associated with these traits. They conclude that the relationship between religion and these aspects of conservatism likely depends on the orientation of the religion itself. Even so, Spilka (2005) explains that prayer and religious practice are forms of ritual and adherence to cultural tradition.

Figure 22. Importance of Ethnicity, Language, and Being Canadian among CES and ACCS Respondents

Despite more frequently believing that having a Canadian heritage is important for being considered truly Canadian, Afghan Canadians said slightly more often than other Canadians that being Canadian was important to their own identity (91.2%), according to our comparison with the CES. In general, ACCS respondents reacted much like CES respondents born outside Canada when faced with the survey item asking about what aspects of themselves they considered important to their identity, with around 8 in 10 from both samples indicating that their ethnicity was an important aspect of their identity and around 9 in 10 from both samples claiming that the language(s) they speak are of similar importance. While the responses from ACCS participants also closely mirror those from CES respondents born in Canada, CES respondents born in Canada (who are primarily white) were much less likely to say that their ethnicity was important to them than those who took part in the ACCS.

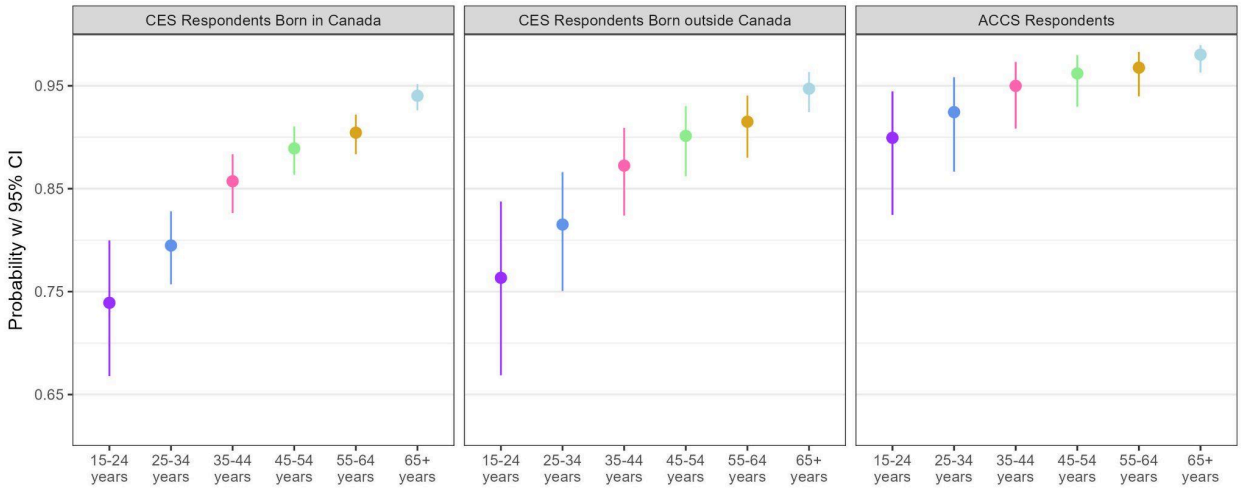

Figure 23. Predicted Probability of Canadian Identity Being Important to CES and ACCS Respondents by Age Group

To more fully comprehend what factors influence one to see being Canadian as important to one's own identity, we rely on another logistic model, this time predicting the probability of feeling that one's Canadian identity is important to oneself as a function of gender, citizenship, education, income, age, whether one feels that Canadian heritage is important for being considered truly Canadian, and whether one lives in Alberta, Ontario, or Québec.[11] Reviewing the results of this model reveals two intriguing findings. First, as revealed in Figure 23, age is positively correlated with a conviction that being Canadian is an important part of one's own identity. However, there appears to be a ceiling on the influence that age can have on this belief: the probability that ACCS respondents between 15–24 years old feel being Canadian is important to their personal identity is 0.90 out of 1, and so the predicted effect of aging on this belief within the Afghan Canadian community is necessarily weaker than it appears to be among CES respondents born in or outside of Canada. The different influence of age on ACCS respondents also suggests a belief that being Canadian is important to one's own identity is not purely due to aging but also the social context in which one ages. For Afghan Canadians who arrived in Canada to escape Taliban rule in Afghanistan, or who may otherwise feel that they cannot currently take pride in being Afghan, being Canadian may feel particularly important. Still, much more research is required to validate this tentative hypothesis.

[11] Gender was also statistically significant in this model, such that being a woman has a moderately positive effect on the likelihood of feeling that being Canadian is important to one's own identity once accounting for the other variables listed in our model. Predictions rendered from this model strongly suggest that the actual differences between men and women with respect to this feeling are only significant among CES respondents who were born in Canada. Among CES respondents born outside Canada as well as ACCS respondents, men and women are predicted to be approximately as likely to feel that being Canadian is important to their personal identity.

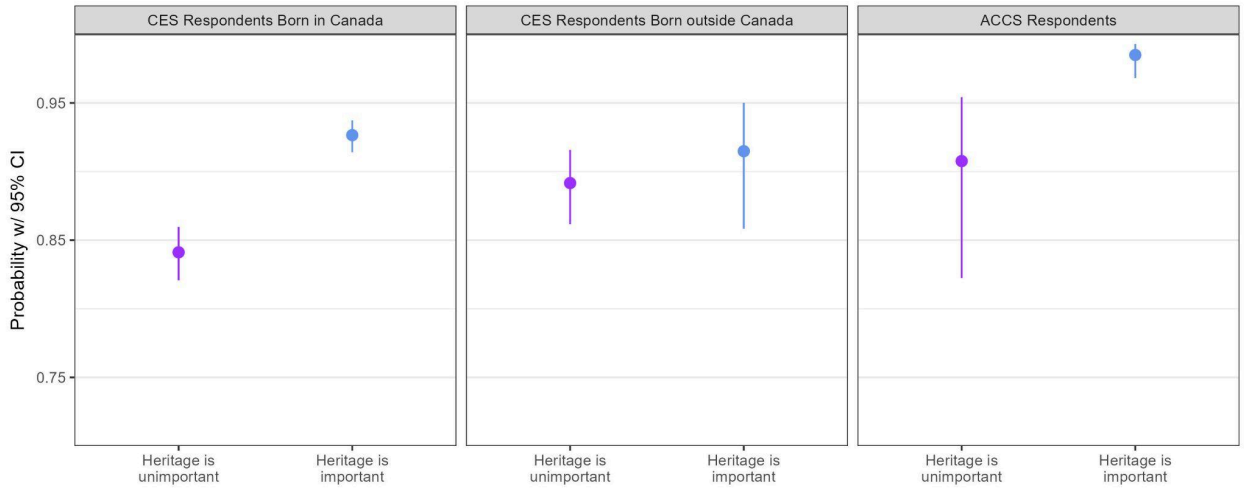

Figure 24. Predicted Probability of Canadian Identity Being Important to CES and ACCS Respondents by Perceptions of Heritage

Our second noteworthy finding is that individuals who believe having a Canadian heritage is important to be considered truly Canadian typically have a higher probability of feeling that being Canadian is also important to their own identity. While this is not particularly surprising by itself, as this finding is consistent with the literature on nationalist sentiment, it is surprising that this finding holds for ACCS respondents, the majority of whom do not possess Canadian heritage. In fact, predictions derived from our logistic model indicate that the probability of an Afghan Canadian who believes in the importance of Canadian heritage also feeling that being Canadian is personally important is an incredibly high 0.98 out of 1, far higher than is predicted elsewhere in Figure 24. While further research is needed to understand precisely why perceptions surrounding the importance of Canadian heritage appear to have such an influence on the Afghan Canadian community, that ACCS respondents generally indicate being Canadian is important to them suggests that part of this apparent influence is a general sense of Canadian national pride. By this logic, it may be that the importance of Canadian heritage reported by ACCS respondents is an effect of taking pride in being Canadian rather than a cause of Canadian national pride.

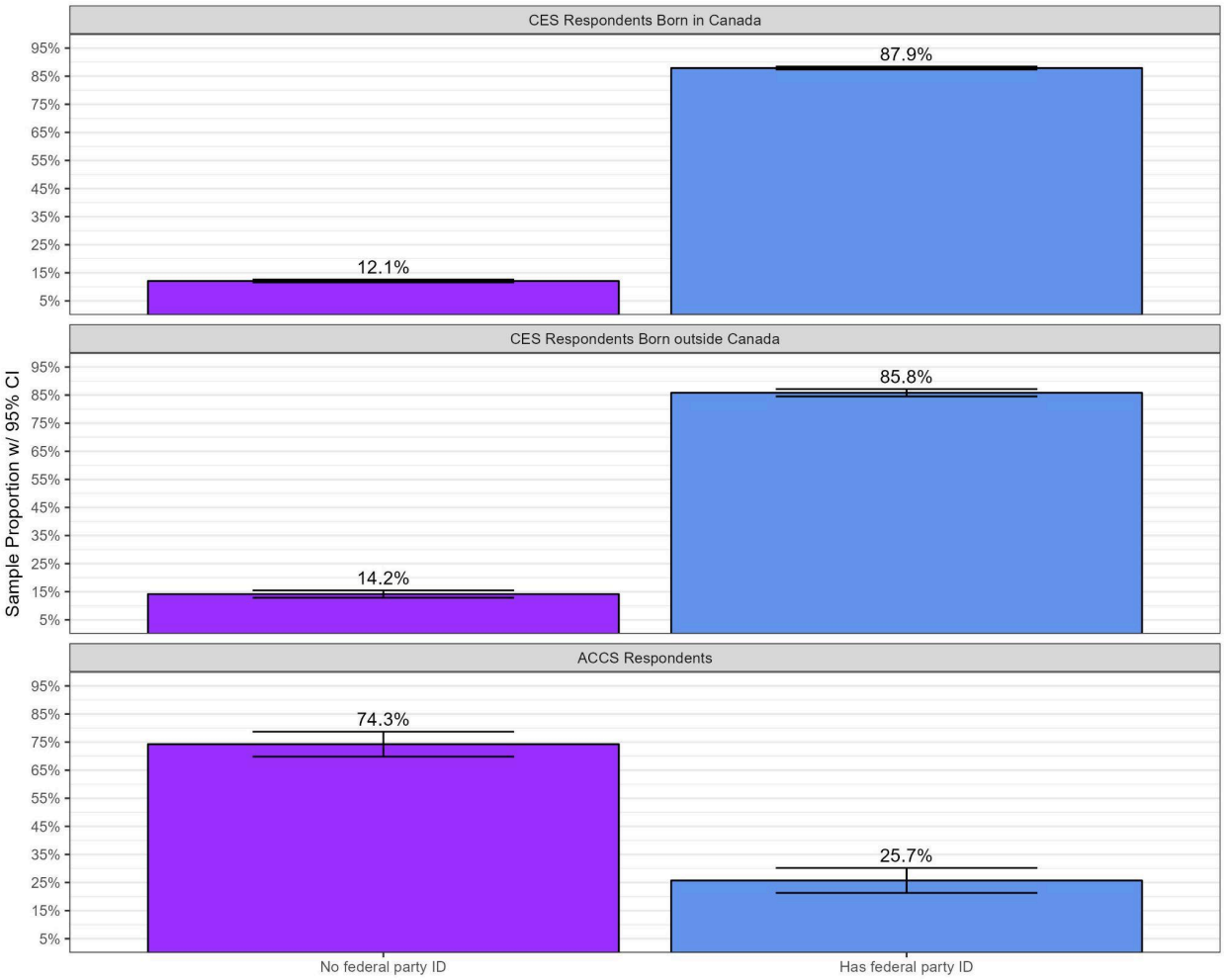

Figure 25. Federal Partisanship among CES and ACCS Respondents

We conclude our report with an effort to contextualize findings from the first ACCS report that are related to politics, beginning with federal partisanship. As shown in Figure 25, ACCS respondents indicated having a federal partisan identity much less frequently than CES respondents, regardless of whether said respondents were born in Canada. Accordingly, only around 1 in 4 (25.7%) Afghan Canadians from our sample told us that they have a federal party identification, compared with more than 8 in 10 CES respondents born in Canada (87.9%) or outside of Canada (85.8%). That CES respondents expressed a federal party identification regardless of whether they were born in Canada strongly suggests that the infrequency with which Afghan Canadians shared having a federal party identification is primarily due to the amount of time that most Afghan Canadians have lived in Canada, but two logistic models (one including the number of years spent in Canada and one excluding this variable) not included here failed to validate this suggestion. In addition, while variables like age and income may relate to the probability of having a federal partisan identity, accounting for these variables did not explain why ACCS respondents are so much less likely to indicate a federal party identification than CES respondents.

Figure 26. Perceptions of Say in Government among CES and ACCS Respondents

As Figure 26 implies, Afghan Canadians also less frequently indicate feeling that they and those around them have no say in government, with around 4 in 10 ACCS respondents (43.1%) sharing this sentiment compared to around 6 in 10 CES respondents (59.1%) who said the same. This is despite the fact that nearly 3 in 4 ACCS respondents (74.2%) were not citizens at the time that they were surveyed, meaning that they literally had no say in provincial or federal governance, compared to CES respondents who were almost entirely Canadian citizens (96.9%). These findings in such a context lead us to believe that perceptions of having no say in government are based less on objective reality and more on expectations about how much say one should have in government. In other words, because most Afghan Canadians have about as much say in government as they might expect (for so long as most remain non-citizens), they less frequently perceive having no say in government than the average Canadian citizen who was born in Canada.

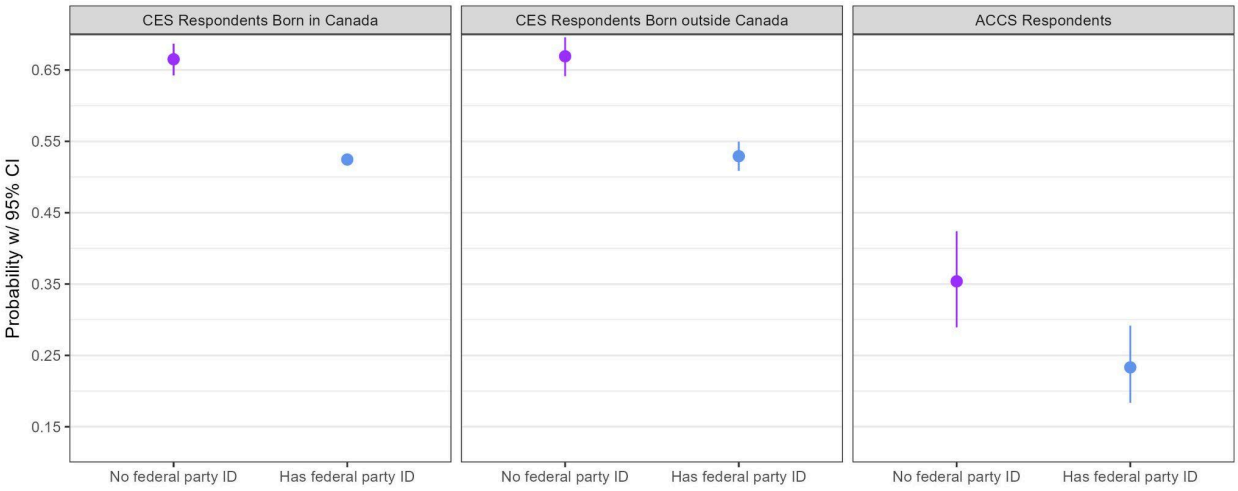

Figure 27. Probability of Perceiving No Say in Government among CES and ACCS Respondents by Federal Party Identification

A logistic model that predicts the probability of feeling like one has no say in government provides little additional insight into why Afghan Canadians felt they had no say so infrequently. Instead, this model—which accounts for citizenship, age, gender, income, education, whether one has a federal party identification, and whether one lives in Alberta, Ontario, or Québec—further highlights that ACCS respondents are unlikely to perceive that they have no say in government regardless of whether this is the case in reality. One of the most substantive factors influencing whether one feels they have a say in government is whether one has a federal party identification, according to our model. Yet the influence of party identification, depicted in Figure 27, reveals that even ACCS respondents without a federal party ID are less likely than CES respondents to claim that they have no say in government. Moreover, ACCS respondents without a federal party identification are not significantly more likely to say they have no say in government than ACCS respondents who shared with us their federal party ID, implying that factors like federal party ID that might influence the probability of an individual feeling like they have no say in government do not have as substantive an influence on this community as they might on the broader Canadian population.

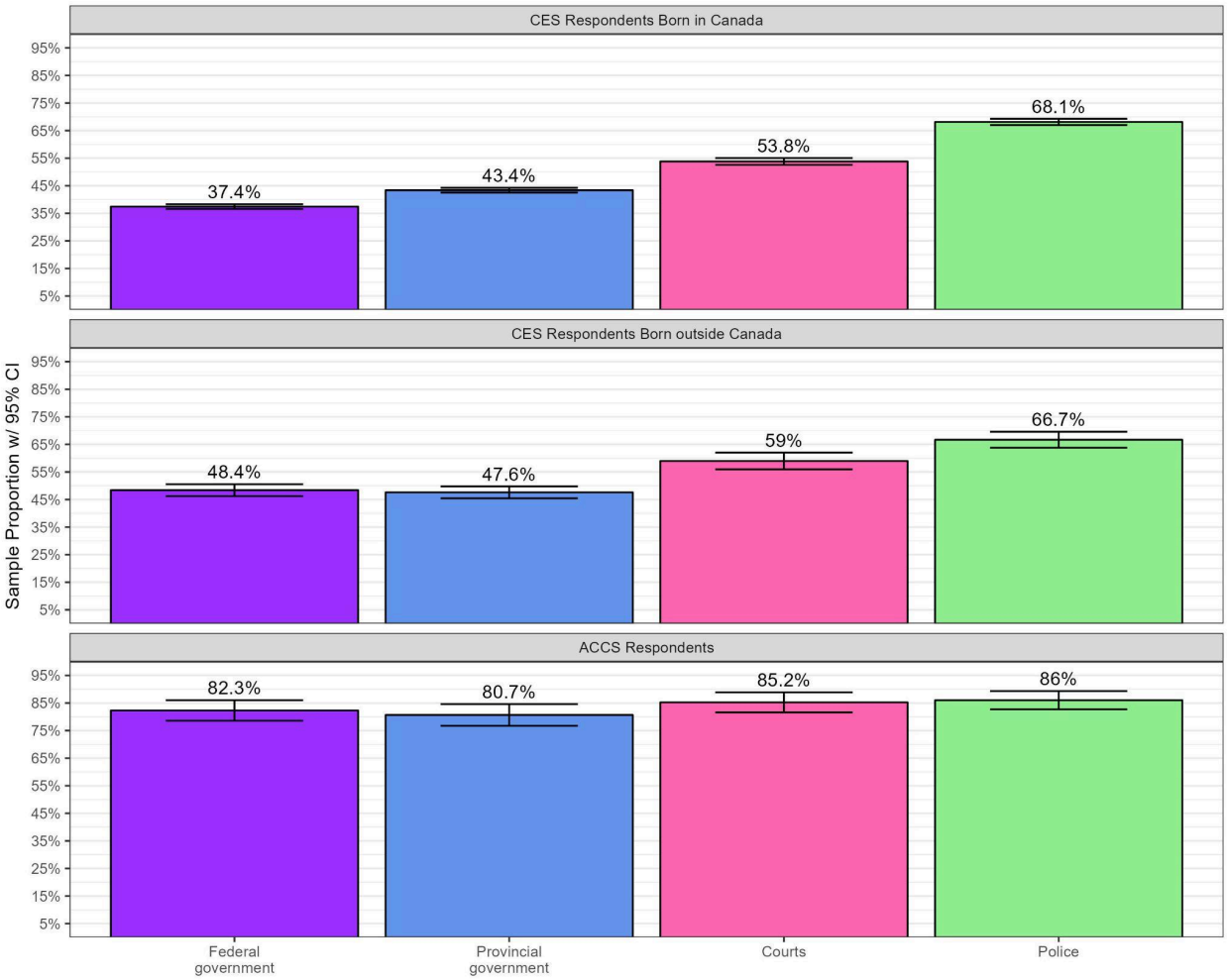

Figure 28. Confidence in Canadian Institutions among CES and ACCS Respondents

Relatedly, as indicated in Figure 28, ACCS respondents much more frequently indicated confidence in Canadian institutions than CES respondents. Despite having relatively little influence over Canada's institutions, around 8 in 10 Afghan Canadians from our survey reported confidence in Canada's federal government (82.3%), their respective provincial governments (80.7%), the courts (85.2%), and the police (86%). These statistics indicate an opinion of governance in Canada that is much more positive than that which appears to be expressed by CES respondents here. This seems especially true when comparing ACCS respondents directly to CES respondents born in Canada, the latter of whom express confidence in the police somewhat frequently (68.1%) and the courts around half the time (53.8%) but who do not typically report confidence in federal (37.4%) or provincial (43.4%) governments. Though there are several potential interpretations of these results, we suspect this data—in conjunction with Afghan Canadians also being less likely to feel they had no say in government—indicates Afghan Canadians hold a deeper appreciation for democracy in Canada than other Canadians on average.

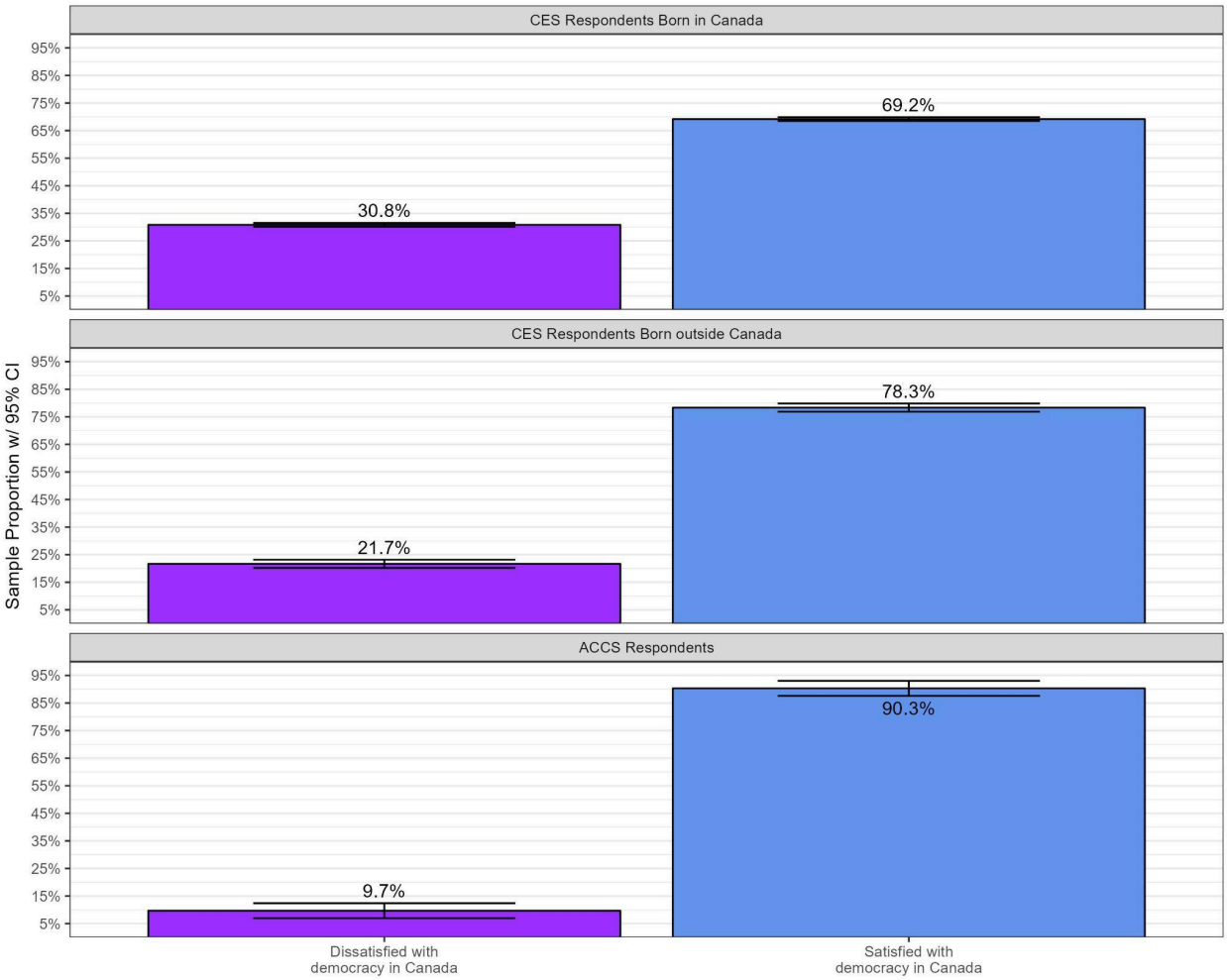

Figure 29. Satisfaction with Democracy among CES and ACCS Respondents

Our data, as shown in Figure 29, lend validity to this claim. Around 9 in 10 Afghan Canadians (90.3%) told us that they were satisfied with democracy in Canada while participating in the ACCS, implying the Afghan Canadian community as a whole is more satisfied with Canadian democracy than other Canadians. By comparison, about 8 in 10 CES respondents born outside Canada (78.3%) reported satisfaction with Canadian democracy, and that number shrinks to around 7 in 10 for Canadian-born CES respondents (69.2%). Though more research is needed to fully understand why ACCS respondents are so much more satisfied with democracy in Canada than CES respondents, it is possible that ACCS respondents see more value in the current state of Canadian democracy than other Canadians because many ACCS respondents came to Canada to avoid living under authoritarian rule back in Afghanistan, whereas for many CES respondents democracy may be taken as granted.

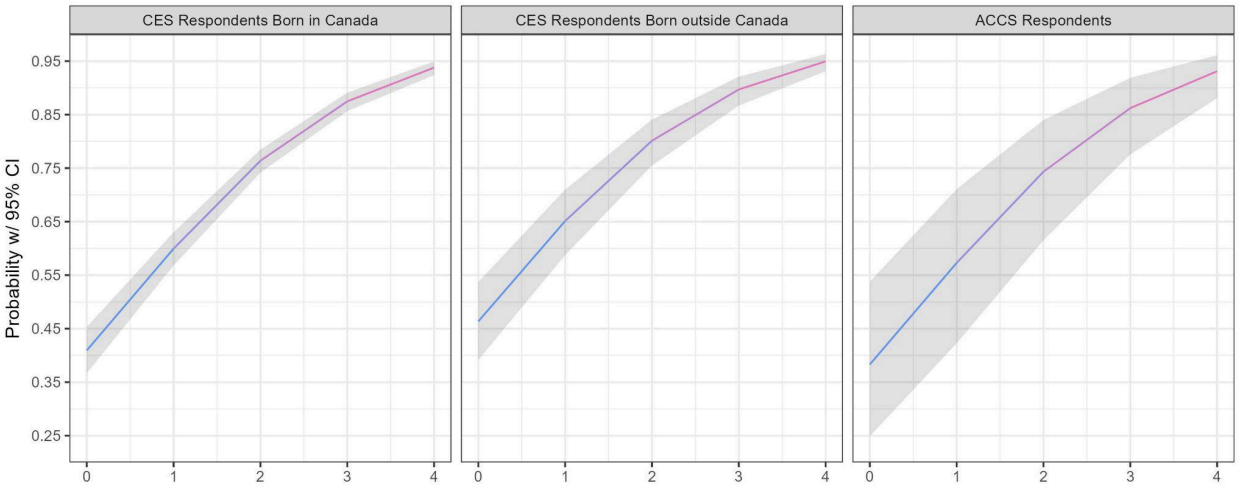

Figure 30. Predicted Probability of Being Satisfied with Democracy among CES and ACCS Respondents by the Number of Institutions in which the Respondent has Confidence

Finally, in an effort to better understand what drives high satisfaction with democracy among members of the Afghan Canadian community, we constructed one last logistic regression model where the probability of being satisfied with democracy in Canada is a function of citizenship, income, gender, age, whether one felt they had a say in government, the number of Canadian institutions in which one reported confidence, and whether one lived in Alberta, Ontario, or Québec. Unsurprisingly, feeling like one has no say in government did not significantly influence the likelihood of being satisfied with democracy among ACCS respondents, but this feeling did have a significantly negative influence on democratic satisfaction for CES respondents, according to our model. By far, the strongest predictor of democratic satisfaction among ACCS respondents was the number of Canadian institutions in which each respondent expressed confidence, and when we account for this variable, the gap in democratic satisfaction between ACCS respondents and CES respondents effectively closes. As can be seen above in Figure 30, the probability of an ACCS respondent who did not have confidence in any Canadian institutions being satisfied with democracy is just 0.39 out of 1, while the probability of an ACCS respondent who expressed confidence in each of the Canadian institutions asked about on our survey instrument being satisfied with democracy is 0.92 out of 1. While these probabilities are not significantly different from those estimated for CES respondents born in Canada or CES respondents born outside Canada, the results from Figure 28 correctly imply that most Afghan Canadians in our sample were confident in all of Canada's institutions, in contrast to other Canadians.

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