

# The social and regional distribution of variants for “rock-paper-scissors”: the forces of monolingualism at play?

Amy Ng & Lucienne Chang

## Introduction

This report analyses data sets from our Written Questionnaire (WQ) on English usage to explore linguistic variants with a specific focus on Canadian monolinguals. There is common methodological debate around the best data collection method in linguistics but historically, Canadian linguists have used the WQ in a variety of ways aligning the American tradition (see Dollinger 2015). The WQ has been used in Canada to analyse similar conditions as our present research, such as the prevalence of linguistic insecurity in school-aged immigrant children (Dollinger & Chan et al).

## Methodology

The linguistic survey, designed in the WQ style, in accordance with best practices in Dollinger (2015), was distributed by the entirety of our ENGL323 class from October 26th to November 17th, 2022, in a snow-ball judgement sample. A TinyURL link and a QR code were generated for easier access and accessibility purposes to the complete survey; when given to our primary respondents and prompting them to nominate other potential data sources that would be able to participate in the survey, resulted in the combined sampling method of convenience sampling alongside snowball sampling. Overall, the survey gathered 1600 responses from a variety of different answers which can be found in Table 1 and Figure 1. 200+ responses were excluded because of unfinished surveys answers.

age	<=19	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	70s	80s	90s	all
#	202	673	124	94	125	74	25	10	2	1329

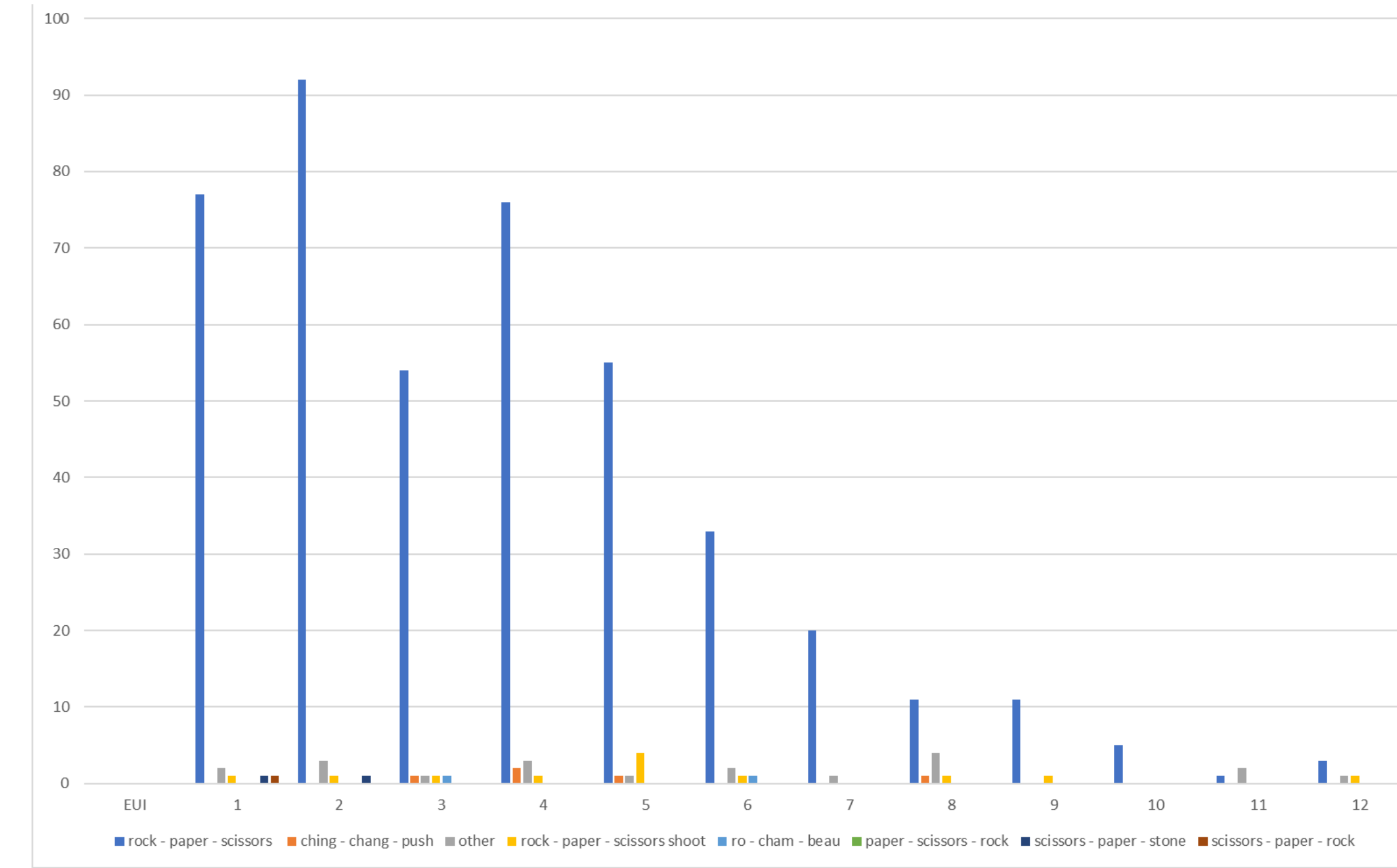
Table 1: Responses regardless of residence

Variant	N
Rock - paper - scissors	1216
Ching - chang - push	7
Other	44
Rock - paper - scissors shoot	32
Ro - cham - beau	10
Paper - scissors - rock	11
Scissors - paper - stone	6
Scissors - paper - rock	3
Sum	1329

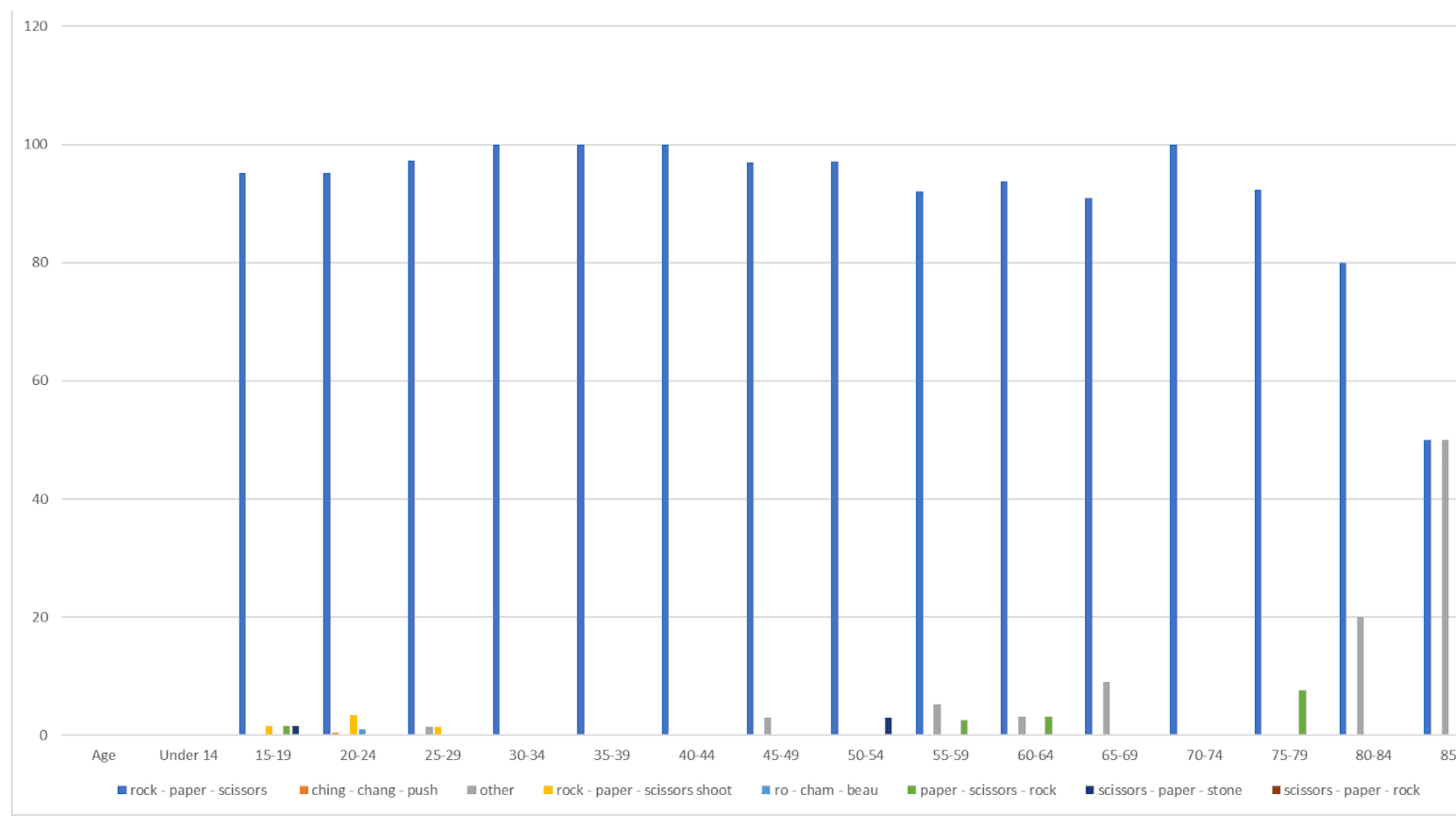
Figure 1. Time apparent changes (all responses regardless of residence)

## Results

In focusing on a specific age range, data from a grouping of younger participants, in this case, confined to a range of 15–30-year-olds: split into focus groups of 15-19, 20-24, and 25-29. This range presented a pattern of high percentages for the popularity of rock-paper-scissors, with all results having percentages in the 90s: 93.8%, 91.9%, and 90.8% respectively. Multilingualism with the WQ method has been problematized due to the difficulty of properly representing multilingual results when confined to the implicit monolingual speaker model the questionnaires are designed upon (see Dollinger 2015: 131).



English usage index for Canada (regardless of region) Note: Did not include data >1.)



Monolingual Canadian responses by age

## Discussions

Respondents, when presented in the WQ with our question, were given a list of multiple answers and an open answer box, but the final survey distributed did not account for our initially proposed recommendation to scramble the potential order of answers to eliminate primacy bias.

### Further issues

- Younger age bias in our data
- Insufficient data for older cohorts

## Conclusion

From the disparity between monolingual and multilingual participant answers within our collected data, we agree that Canada is a language subtractive setting. When young speakers enter the Canadian school system, they are exposed to Standard Canadian English, becoming more language-ideologically biased to what is “proper” English in Canada.

Highly proficient, highly educated multilingual respondents who speak more than one language than English may reflect greater social bias in their answers, since adopting English as a primary language gives significant social currency in Canada. We surveyed multilingual respondents who, instead of answering other and included an answer in another language, went with the majority choice of rock-paper-scissors. The rising popularity of other and the inclusion of answers in different languages may suggest a lessening of the pressure to conform to English as the majority Canadian language for multilingual speakers, as multiculturalism and diversity movements become increasingly popularised in the Canadian social intelligence.

## Reference / Bibliography

1. BC Linguistic Survey. 2022. ENGL 323 001 Fall Term 2022 (T1). Instructor: Stefan Dollinger. UBC, Department of English Language and Literatures.
2. Dollinger, Stefan & Chan, Vanessa & Pasula, Kate & Maag, Anthony. In press. How linguistically tolerant or insecure are school-aged children? A matched-guise, gamified approach for 6 to 12-year-olds in Canada. 10.13140/RG.2.2.29243.54566.
3. Dollinger, Stefan, 2015. The Written Questionnaire in Social Dialectology: History, Theory, Practice. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

## Acknowledgement

Thank you to Stephan Dollinger for encouraging and helping with our initial submission.

