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Attitudes towards the Communications Security Establishment Baseline Study

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Final Report

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I hereby certify as Senior Officer of EKOS Research Associates, Inc. that the deliverables fully comply with the political neutrality requirements outlined in the Communications Policy of the Government of Canada and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research.

Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W Daley', written in a cursive style.

Will Daley
Vice President
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1. Executive Summary

1.1. Introduction

Background and Objectives

The Communications Security Establishment (CSE) is Canada's national cryptologic agency. Unique within Canada's security and intelligence community, CSE employs code-makers and code-breakers to provide the Government of Canada with information technology security (IT Security) and foreign signals intelligence (SIGINT) services. CSE also provides technical and operational assistance to federal law enforcement and security agencies.

Although CSE is celebrating its 70th anniversary, the agency is not well known among the Canadian public. One of CSE's organizational objectives is to work to strengthen the trust and confidence of its stakeholders through the delivery of valuable results, and continued lawfulness and privacy protection. In this light, the primary objectives of this research are as follows:

- Establish a baseline measurement of views towards CSE in order to help measure the success of future communications initiatives.
- Better understand the public's awareness and attitudes towards CSE to help shape communications strategies.
- Explore awareness and views of career opportunities to help guide recruiting marketing strategies.

In addition to this overarching objective, it is also critical for CSE to maintain — and in some cases, increase — staffing levels. In particular, CSE needs to identify individuals with skill sets in the sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics (collectively known as STEM disciplines). In light of the need to recruit these specialized skill sets, an additional facet of this research is intended to establish a baseline of interest in a career with CSE and identify some of the factors that may motivate the choice to pursue a career with the CSE.

Methodology Overview

In order to achieve the objectives identified above EKOS conducted a 10-minute survey among n=1,205 Canadian adults between May 3 and 18, 2017. The sample was divided into two groups: a general public sample of n=924 who are not involved in the STEM disciplines and a sample of n=281 who have either obtained a post-secondary degree or who work in a STEM discipline.

The results were weighted to reflect the characteristics of the general population as per census by region, age and gender. In addition, the results were weighted to reflect the attainment of a post-secondary education in one of the STEM disciplines, as per the table below.

	No. of Respondents	Unweighted %	Weighted %
Total Sample	1205	-	-
General public (non-STEM)	924	77%	88%
STEM respondents	281	23%	12%

The overall sample of n=1,205 obtains a margin of error of +/-2.8 percentage points. The unweighted sample of n=281 STEM respondents obtains a +/-5.8 percentage point margin of error. The margins of error are calculated at a 95% confidence interval.

A detailed methodological report is provided in the Appendices.

Contract Value

The final value of this contract, including HST, is \$83,699.10.

1.2. Key findings

Awareness of CSE

On an unaided basis, only 3% of respondents correctly name “CSE” or the “Communications Security Establishment” as the government agency responsible for intercepting and analyzing foreign communications and helping protect the government’s computer networks. The Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) is much more commonly named as the agency described (mentioned by 22%).

When the Communications Security Establishment, or CSE, is mentioned by name, nearly two in five (37%) said either yes (26%) or maybe (11%) when asked if they had heard of it before.

Importance of and Support for CSE

When provided a brief description of CSE as “the Canadian government agency which is responsible for intercepting and analyzing foreign communications, and helping protect the government’s computer networks,” over four in five respondents (82%) say they consider CSE to be important, including 51% who say CSE is very important.

When asked whether they support specific elements of CSE’s mandate, nearly all respondents (93%) support protecting the government’s computer networks from cyber-attacks, including 79% who say they strongly support this element.

Strong majorities expressed support for other tested elements of CSE’s mandate, including 81% who said they support CSE assisting law enforcement by helping to collect and analyze communications and 78% who said they support CSE gathering foreign “signals intelligence.” However, while majorities support these elements of CSE’s mandate, the levels of “strong support” are less than half of respondents, representing a softer level of support for these activities.

Respondents were asked whether they would be more or less likely to support CSE based on more information about the work the agency does. Among the tested statements, respondents were most likely to say that CSE’s support for Canadian Armed Forces missions, including cases of kidnapped Canadians, would inspire them towards greater support for CSE (87% more likely to support). The statements that CSE blocks 100 million attempted cyber-attacks daily (83% more likely to support) and that CSE may only assist domestic law enforcement agencies when they have the legal authority to do so (78%) both have a similarly positive impact on perceptions of CSE.

Trust in the CSE

Nearly three in four respondents (73%) say they either completely (14%) or somewhat trust (59%) CSE to act ethically and legally in fulfilling its mandate. Just over one in ten (12%) say

they do not trust CSE much (8%) or at all (4%). Fifteen percent (15%) say they have no opinion. There are no noteworthy distinctions in trust in the CSE amongst the demographic subgroups.

When asked to choose between two opposing statements, two in three Canadians (65%) support the notion that the public has the right to know more about the sort of information the government collects and the purposes it has in collecting it, while 35% support the crucial nature of secrecy to the work CSE does.

Balancing Security and Civil Liberties

Respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree with several statements about the balance between keeping the country secure and preserving civil liberties. Seven in ten Canadians (70%) agree that if steps aren't taken to secure computers and the internet, Canada will be at greater risk of terrorist attack.

When it comes to trust, a majority of Canadians (55%) say they trust the Government of Canada to strike the right balance between security and civil liberties, while one in four (25%) say they do not trust the government in this area. Fewer than half (48%) say they can trust Canada's intelligence agencies to strike the right balance between security and civil liberties.

Over two in five (43%) say they are concerned about information that government intelligence agencies may be collecting about them (although only 16% say they are very concerned, rating as a seven on the scale).

Canadians are divided as to whether police and intelligence agencies should have more powers to ensure security, even if it compromises personal privacy safeguards. While 43% agree, 38% disagree.

CSE as a Career Option

Respondents who identified as "STEM respondents," defined as those who said they had studied or work in a field within the sciences, technology, engineering or mathematics, were asked whether or not they would be likely to consider a career with CSE. Overall nearly four in ten STEM respondents (37%) say they would be likely to consider a career with CSE, including 11% who say they would be very likely to consider a career with the CSE. Three in five (61%) say they would not be likely to consider a career with CSE.

When asked how important they consider several difference factors when thinking about their career, STEM respondents most often say work that is intellectually challenging is most important (92% say it is essential or very important), followed by work that offers a good or steady income (83%). Work that is very well paid (77%), work that provides good benefits (76%) and work that serves an important public purpose (69%) are all seen as somewhat less important, though in each case large majorities see these as important factors. Prestige is least often described as an important factor (23%).