



Perceptions of Canadian Programming and News

Executive Summary

Prepared for the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC)

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This public opinion research report presents the results of a 10-minute online survey of 1,226 Canadians aged 16 years of age and older and eight online focus groups, four in English and four in French, conducted with Canadians aged 18 and older. The fieldwork took place from 13 to 21 November 2024 (virtual focus groups) and from 15 November to 5 December 2024 (online survey).

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre: *Les perceptions au sujet de la programmation canadienne et des nouvelles*

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Executive Summary

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) commissioned Phoenix Strategic Perspectives (Phoenix SPI) to conduct quantitative and qualitative public opinion research (POR) to support the development of new policies following changes to the *Broadcasting Act*.

1. Research Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research was to reflect the views and attitudes of Canadians and Indigenous Peoples regarding Canadian audiovisual programming and audiovisual and audio news programming. The specific objectives were to determine the following: the importance and value of Canadian programming; ease of access to Canadian programming; the types of news programming that are important to Canadians; the differences in availability of news between urban and rural areas; and views on the quality and diversity of Canadian news.

2. Methodology

The research included a 10-minute probability online survey of 1,226 Canadians aged 16+ and eight 90-minute virtual focus groups with Canadians aged 18+. The online survey included an oversample of Canadians living in rural areas or northern communities, and those living in English or French official language minority communities (OLMCs). The target populations for the focus groups were those living in English and French OLMCs, members of equity-deserving groups, Canadians living in rural areas or in the Territories, and Canadians living in urban areas. Separate groups were conducted with each audience. Equity-deserving groups included Black and other racialized persons, people who identify as 2SLGBTQI+, women, and persons with disabilities. The fieldwork took place from 13 to 21 November 2024 (virtual focus groups) and from 15 November 15 to 5 December 2024 (online survey).

3. Key Findings

- ***“Canadian programming” brings to mind various things and watching it makes people feel proud.*** Among focus group participants, the term “Canadian programming” brought to mind specific programs, networks, channels, or genres of programming, as well as programming that is characteristic of the country in one way or another. When asked how watching Canadian programming makes them feel about their identity as Canadians, focus group participants routinely pointed to feelings of pride and connectedness. This was the case among both Anglophone and Francophone participants, but Francophone participants routinely associated these feelings specifically with Quebec programming.
- ***Many Canadians say they have no difficulty identifying Canadian programming, and the presence of Canadian locations in programming is one of the measures they use to identify Canadian programming.*** The majority of survey respondents (60%) think they can identify Canadian programming when looking for something to watch on cable, satellite, or online streaming services. Nearly three-quarters of respondents (72%) identify Canadian programming as stories that are set in a Canadian location, while half or more of respondents consider Canadian programming to be programming that reflects Canadian realities (58%), that includes Canadian actors (56%), and that is based on a Canadian story (51%). Focus group

participants offered similar assessments of what makes a Canadian program Canadian: Canadian locations/filming in Canada, Canadian actors, and a Canadian production crew.

- ***Ensuring that Canadian programming reflects Canadian culture is important to many, but when asked to rank priorities in relation to the CRTC's role, respondents ranked economic priorities more highly.*** Three-quarters of survey respondents said it is very (31%) or somewhat (44%) important to them that Canadian programming reflects Canadian culture and identity. When asked to consider the CRTC's role of ensuring that creators receive the support they need to create and distribute their stories **and** that Canadians have access to diverse programming, survey respondents ranked Canadian jobs in the entertainment industry as their highest priority, ahead of highlighting Canadian culture and identity, cultivating a shared sense of Canadian identity, and promoting diversity.
- ***News and current affairs matter to most Canadians when it comes to the different types of Canadian programming that are available.*** Eight in 10 (81%) survey respondents said that the type of Canadian programming that matters most to them is news and current affairs. Forty-eight per cent of survey respondents pointed to Canadian comedies, drama series, or fictional stories, 41% to documentaries on Canadian topics, and 36% to Canadian sports. One in 10 (10%) said that programming that reflects a diversity of Canadians matters to them most.
- ***Trustworthiness is critical for Canadians when selecting Canadian news sources.*** Survey respondents and focus group participants prioritize trustworthiness when it comes to selecting Canadian news sources. For 90% of surveyed Canadians, the trustworthiness of news sources is their top priority. Among focus group participants, trustworthiness included credibility, reliability, accuracy, impartiality, journalistic rigour, and the absence of sensationalism. Other priorities included news coverage that presents a variety of perspectives, balanced coverage, and in-depth reporting.
- ***A balance between local, national, and international coverage is important, but the balance does not necessarily need to be available in a single news source.*** The vast majority of surveyed Canadians (89%) agree that it is important for a news source to provide a balance between local, national, and international coverage. Among focus group participants, this view was expressed primarily by those from rural areas and the north. Participants explained that a balance in coverage is important because they value knowing what is happening within and outside of their communities, because they believe that national issues can impact local affairs, because they are interested in knowing what is happening elsewhere in Canada, and because they value exposure to different points of view. Participants who felt that this balance was not really important explained that they use a range of sources for their news, with specific sources selected for local news.
- ***Many Canadians can find their local issues reflected in news sources, but there is some room for improvement.*** When it comes to whether or not local issues are reflected in the news, 68% of survey respondents agree that their local issues are reflected in the news available in their area. Respondents living in rural areas or northern communities were less likely to agree than those from urban areas. This sentiment was echoed in the focus groups, in which some participants from rural and northern areas of the country expressed the opinion that their regions do not tend to get much coverage in national news.

4. Intended Use of the Results

The findings from this POR will be placed on the record of *The Path Forward – Defining “Canadian program” and supporting the creation and distribution of Canadian programming in the audio-visual sector*, Broadcasting Notice of Consultation CRTC 2024-288.

5. Contract Value

The contract value was \$128,735.25 (including applicable taxes).

6. Statement of Political Neutrality

I hereby certify as a Senior Officer of Phoenix SPI that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the *Communications Policy of the Government of Canada* and the *Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research*. Specifically, the deliverables do not contain any reference to electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leader.



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