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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Survey of Electors following the December 3, 2018, By-election in Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes (Ontario)

December 2018

*Prepared for:*  
Elections Canada

Submitted by:



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**Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français.**

## **Executive Summary**

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Elections Canada commissioned Phoenix Strategic Perspectives Inc. (Phoenix SPI) to conduct research to help evaluate the December 3, 2018, federal by-election in the electoral district of Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Ontario.

### **Background and Objectives**

Elections Canada (EC) is an independent, non-partisan agency that reports directly to Parliament. The agency is mandated to conduct federal general elections, by-elections and referendums, administer the political financing provisions of the *Canada Elections Act* (CEA) and monitor compliance with enforce electoral legislation.

As part of its evaluation program, the agency wanted to conduct a survey of eligible electors in the electoral district of Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Ontario, where a by-election was held on December 3, 2018. The purpose of the survey was to obtain reliable survey data to evaluate electors' opinions, attitudes and knowledge of the agency's services and various aspects of their experience.

The research objectives were to measure electors' opinions on various election-related issues. More specifically, the survey aimed to assess the following aspects:

- awareness of the by-election and of the different methods of voting
- sources of information about the election
- experiences with registration, including the voter information card
- experiences with communications from EC
- experiences with voting in the by-election
- attitudes towards Elections Canada and election results

The results will be used to assist in evaluating and refining Elections Canada's programs and services to the electorate. They may also help in developing the Chief Electoral Officer's reports to Parliament.

### **Methodology**

A 12-minute random digit dial telephone survey was conducted with 400 eligible electors. Eligible electors were Canadian citizens, at least 18 years of age on polling day (December 3, 2018), who were residents of the electoral district (i.e., had an address of ordinary residence in the electoral district) from the first day of the by-election period until election day.

An overlapping dual-frame (landline and cell phone) sample was used to minimize coverage error, with 80% of dialling done on cell phone numbers and 20% of dialling done on landline phones. Those who declined to participate in the survey when contacted by telephone were

offered the possibility of completing the survey through an online self-administered questionnaire instead of a phone interview. Five respondents chose to participate using the online questionnaire, however, none of these respondents completed the online survey. As a result, all completed surveys were conducted over the phone.

The survey data was weighted to accurately reflect the age and gender distribution of eligible electors. The data collection was conducted December 4 to 18, 2018. Based on a sample of this size, the results can be considered accurate to within  $\pm 4.9\%$ , 19 times out of 20. *For a more complete description of the methodology, refer to Annex 1.*

## Key Findings

### I. Awareness of By-election and Voter Information

- The vast majority of respondents (94%) said they were aware of the December 3, 2018, federal by-election that took place in their riding of Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Ontario.
- In order to improve data about recall of EC advertising, a split sample technique was used to test a new question about recall. The first half of respondents were asked the traditional question about whether or not they recalled any advertising or communications from Elections Canada about when, where and the ways to vote. The other half was first asked about recall of political advertising and media coverage of the by-election, before being asked whether they recalled EC advertising. In both samples, a majority of electors recalled advertisements (56% and 63%, respectively). However, the second formulation resulted in a higher proportion of respondents expressing recall.
- Those who recalled advertisements or communications about the by-election were most likely to recall one in a newspaper (30%) or on the radio (23%), or recall receiving their voter information card (23%).
- A majority of respondents (86%) felt informed about when, where and the ways to vote for the December 3, 2018, by-election, with nearly three-quarters (72%) saying they felt *very* informed.
- Just over 1 in 10 respondents (12%) said they visited the Elections Canada website during the campaign and few (4%) said they contacted Elections Canada during the campaign.
- Among those who contacted EC there was widespread satisfaction with the information they received: 90% were satisfied with the information they received from the Elections Canada website and 86% were satisfied with the information they received when they contacted Elections Canada.

### II. Voter Information Card (VIC) and Registration

- Eighty-seven percent of electors received their VIC and 91% of those who received their VIC brought it to the polling station.
- Virtually all electors who received a VIC reported it had the correct name (98%) and address (96%).

- Three-quarters of electors knew that voters need to be registered to vote in the federal by-election.
- 7 in 10 electors surveyed were aware that electors can register at the polling place and then vote immediately after.
- A split sample technique was used to confirm the impact of question formulation on measures of awareness of online registration, as has been done since October 2017. Half of respondents were asked the question as it was formulated in previous surveys, and the other half was asked a simplified version of the question. The simplified formulation resulted in a higher proportion of respondents who said they are aware of online registration (63%) compared to the original formulation (51%).

### **III. Voting and Voter Participation**

- Two-thirds (66%) of those who were aware of the by-election reported voting in it.
- Among respondents who did not vote in the election, nearly half (47%) said they did not vote due to everyday life and health reasons. One-quarter (25%) did not vote due to political reasons and 7% did not vote due to electoral process-related reasons.
- Over two-thirds (69%) of respondents who voted in the by-election reported voting at a polling station on election day.
- When it came to voting methods available for voters, the vast majority of electors (93%) were aware they can vote at an advance polling station. Most (60%) were aware they could vote at a local Elections Canada office, and one-third (33%) were aware they could vote by mail.

### **IV. Voter Identification**

- Similar to findings from previous post-electoral surveys, a question about voter identification found that virtually all respondents (98%) were aware that voters had to provide proof of identity; however, a smaller proportion (93%) were aware that voters had to provide proof of address.
- In a split sample experiment, a second approach was tested and found lower numbers of respondents who were fully aware of identification requirements: 86% of respondents correctly answered that electors must provide proof of both identity and address to vote at a federal election; 13.9% answered incorrectly or did not know.
- Virtually all respondents (99%) found it easy to meet the identification requirements, with 94% saying it was *very easy*.

### **V. Voter Experience**

- Virtually all those who voted during the December 3, 2018, federal by-election (97%) reported that it was easy to vote, with 88% saying it was *very easy*.

- The same proportion of voters (97%) was satisfied with the services provided by Elections Canada staff when they voted, with 93% saying they were *very* satisfied.
- Virtually all those who voted (98%) were satisfied with their overall voting experience, with 85% saying they were *very* satisfied.

## **VI. Fairness and Trust**

- Two variations on a question about electors' perception of the fairness of election administration by Elections Canada were asked to respondents. Half of the respondents were asked specifically about the December 3, 2018, *federal by-election*, while the other half were asked about federal by-elections in general. The general formulation resulted in a more substantial majority (91%) saying that Elections Canada runs elections fairly, compared to 82% of respondents who were asked the more specific formulation. The general formulation also led to a smaller proportion of "don't know" answers (3%), compared to the specific question (16%).
- A split sample approach was also used to survey respondents about trust in the accuracy of the by-election results. As in previous by-election surveys, respondents were asked about their level of trust in the accuracy of the election results in their riding. Before answering the question, half of respondents (n=198) was read the following preamble: "*At the end of a federal election, poll workers in each riding count ballots by hand and report the results to Elections Canada.*" Both formulations yielded similar overall results, with 88% of respondents expressing very or somewhat high trust in the accuracy of results in both cases.

## **Notes to Readers**

- For editorial purposes, the terms "electors" and "respondents" are used interchangeably to denote survey participants. The term "voters" denotes survey participants who reported having voted.
- All results in the report are expressed as percentages, unless otherwise noted. Percentages may not always add to 100% due to rounding or multiple mentions.
- The number of respondents changes throughout the report because questions were often asked to subsamples of the survey population. Accordingly, readers should be aware of this and exercise caution when interpreting results based on smaller numbers of respondents.
- Demographic and other subgroup differences are identified in the report. When reporting subgroup variations, only differences that are significant at the 95% confidence level and that pertain to a subgroup sample size of more than n=15 are discussed in the report.

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The contract value was \$35,627.88 (including HST).

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

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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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