



***Survey of Election Officers
Following the 43rd Federal General Election***

Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

Elections Canada commissioned Phoenix SPI to conduct a telephone survey with election officers following the 43rd general election held on October 21st, 2019. Similar to surveys following past general elections, the purpose of this survey was to measure election officers' opinions on various election-related issues and on the quality of services they received from the agency. This year, however, the questionnaire was updated to reflect the development of new products and services, the inclusion of issues such as absenteeism and harassment in the workplace, and the addition of recruitment officers to the study population. The questionnaire also included an enhanced set of background questions to offer a new look at the socio-demographic characteristics of election officers. Where relevant and possible, the results from this survey are compared with the results from the Survey of Election Officers following the 40th, 41st and 42nd federal general elections.

A 20-minute telephone survey was conducted with a stratified random sample of 4,251 election officers between December 14th, 2019 and January 12th, 2020. The survey data were weighted to accurately reflect the distribution of election officers by region, type of position, type of poll and type of polling station. Based on a sample of this size, the overall results can be considered accurate to within $\pm 1.5\%$, 19 times out of 20.

Recruitment Process and Tools

Election officers were most likely to have become aware of the opportunity to work at the 2019 federal election because they worked in a previous election (38%) or through word of mouth from friends, relatives or colleagues (38%). Fewer became aware of the opportunity to work in the federal election through Elections Canada's website (11%) or through non-Elections Canada websites (8%).

Just over half of the recruitment officers and assistant recruitment officers said it was easy to recruit individuals to work at the polls on election day (57%) and for advanced polling days (57%). While recruitment was generally viewed as easy, 59% of recruitment officers and assistant recruitment officers were not satisfied with the Recruitment Management System (RMS). Of those not satisfied with the RMS, limited functionality was the main reason offered in explanation (59%).

About two-thirds (68%) of the recruitment officers and assistant recruitment officers said that they needed to hire poll staff who were bilingual or who spoke the minority language in their electoral district. Three in 10 (31%) had difficulties doing so. Approximately one-third (34%) of these officers provided accommodations for an applicant experiencing mental or physical barriers to be able to participate in the interview or the training.

Training and Preparedness

More than eight in 10 poll workers (83%) were very or somewhat satisfied with the training session. Over the last decade, satisfaction with the training remains virtually unchanged: 86% in 2008, 83% in 2011 and 84% in 2015. Approximately one-third of each of those not satisfied with the training pointed to the quality of training (34%) and to their perception that the training session did not provide enough information (32%) to explain why.

Eighty-eight percent (88%) of poll workers who worked at least one of their scheduled shifts said the training they received prepared them somewhat or very well to undertake their tasks during the last federal election. At 88%, the overall level of preparedness of poll workers has decreased from the high of 96% reported in 2015. Of note, the decline from 2015 to 2019 is particularly acute in the proportion of poll workers who said they were very well prepared to undertake their tasks, which dropped from 63% in 2015 to 39% in 2019.

Experience Working at the Polls

Nine in 10 (90%) poll workers expressed satisfaction with the way the last federal election went, including 53% who were very satisfied. In 2019, the level of satisfaction with the way the last federal election went is identical to 2015, when 90% of poll workers also expressed satisfaction. Overall satisfaction, however, remains slightly lower than the 93% reported in 2011.

Nine in 10 (91%; up four percentage points since 2015) poll staff said that the building where they worked was suitable for holding an election. In addition, 90% of central poll supervisors, deputy returning officers, and registration officers said it was easy to register electors, with 63% saying it was very easy. Perceptions of the ease of registering electors have improved since 2015, when 86% of central poll supervisors, deputy returning officers, and registration officers said this was easy.

Not only did poll workers find it easy to register electors, but most said the flow of electors at the polls went smoothly; 71% said the flow went very smoothly, while 25% said it went somewhat smoothly. Satisfaction with the flow of electors (95%) is similar to previous election years: 94% in 2008, 95% in 2011, and 93% in 2015.

Satisfaction with Election Materials

Nine in 10 (92%) poll staff reported being satisfied with the election materials that were provided to them, including 61% who were very satisfied. Satisfaction levels are consistent with previous results: 89% were satisfied in 2015 and 90% in 2011. What is noteworthy, however, is that the proportion of poll workers very satisfied with these materials has increased significantly, from 52% in 2015 to 61% in 2019. Of those who were not satisfied with the election materials provided, 33% were unsatisfied with the guidebook, and 22% were not satisfied with the instructions for closing the polls.

Voter Identification Requirements

Virtually everyone said the identification of electors at their polling station went well, either somewhat (20%) or very (79%) well. Compared to 2015, a greater proportion of poll workers said the identification process went very well (79% in 2019 compared to 68% in 2015). Ninety-six percent of poll workers said the voter information card facilitated the identification of electors. Ninety-eight percent of registration officers and deputy returning officers said they were somewhat (20%) or very (78%) well prepared to apply the voter identification requirements. This is similar to 2015, when 97% of registration officers and deputy returning officers said they were prepared to apply the voter identification requirements.

Poll Workers' Absenteeism

Ninety-five percent (95%) of poll staff reported having worked all their scheduled shifts. Three percent (3%) were absent for all their scheduled shifts, and 2% were absent for at least one of their shifts. Among poll workers who were absent for at least part of one shift, 39% attributed their absence to a physical illness or musculoskeletal injury. This is followed by 22% who said their shift presented a conflict with their regular job, school or another responsibility, and 11% who had a family emergency.

Approximately eight in 10 (82%) recruitment and assistant recruitment officers needed to backfill positions due to poll staff not showing up for their shifts. Three in four poll workers (75%) who said fellow poll staff were absent for part of, or all, of their shifts indicated that absenteeism had no impact (38%) or only a minor impact (37%).

Working Conditions

More than half (54%) said the working conditions they experienced were very good, while an additional 38% said the conditions were fairly good. In total, therefore, 92% of election workers offered a positive assessment of the working conditions. Satisfaction with working conditions is virtually unchanged since 2015 (94% in 2015 versus 92% in 2019). What has changed is the proportion of poll workers describing the working conditions as very good. This has declined since 2015: 63% in 2015 compared to 54% in 2019.

Eighty percent (80%) of poll workers expressed modest or strong satisfaction with the hourly rate of pay. This is virtually unchanged since 2015, when 81% were somewhat or very satisfied with their pay.