



Public Opinion Research Study on Electoral Matters – Wave 1

Prepared for Elections Canada

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Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français

This public opinion research report presents the results of an online survey conducted by Léger Marketing Inc. on behalf of Elections Canada. The quantitative research study was conducted with 2,582 Canadians who were eligible electors, residing in different regions of Canada, between April 1 and April 11, 2021.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre *Étude d'opinion publique sur des questions électorales*.

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Executive Summary

Léger is pleased to present Elections Canada with this report on its findings from a quantitative survey designed to learn about Canadians who are eligible electors residing in different regions of the country. This report was prepared by Léger Marketing Inc., which was contracted by Elections Canada (contract number 05005-200923/001/CY, awarded on February 26, 2021).

Background and Objectives

As per its mandate, Elections Canada must always be ready to organize elections, even in unusual contexts such as the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 has had significant social and economic impacts, including repercussions for how Elections Canada administers electoral events that may be held during the pandemic.

In this particular context, Elections Canada wanted to gauge the general public's opinion, on various electoral issues and topics, at different points in time. This report presents the results of the first wave (T1) of the survey conducted. This study (T1) will serve as a baseline for measuring and identifying significant trends or changes in the opinions of Canadian electors.

This survey was carried out using a quantitative study.

The project aims, among other things, to improve understanding of Canadian electors':

- opinions on emerging issues that pertain to the administration of elections
- trust in electoral administration and other national institutions
- sources of information about elections and the electoral process

More specifically, Elections Canada wants to track any significant fluctuation in these measures over time.

Intended Use of the Research

The information provided in these research reports will be used to inform Elections Canada's strategic communications and to support the GE Delivery in Pandemic Circumstances Working Group (GEDPC-WG) and its sub-working groups in developing their recommendations.

Methodology

This public opinion research was conducted using online surveys and computer-assisted web interviewing technology. Fieldwork for the survey was carried out from April 1, 2021, to April 11, 2021. A total of 2,582 eligible Canadian voters with demographic characteristics reflective of the Canadian population were surveyed. The sample was drawn randomly from the Leger Opinion online panel, and the overall response rate for the survey was 16%.

Using data from the most recent Canadian census, the weighting was done in each region by gender and age to ensure the best possible representation of the sample in each region and overall. The weight of each region was adjusted to be equivalent to its actual weight in relation to the distribution of the Canadian population. The weighting factors are presented in detail in Appendix A of this report.

A pretest of 20 interviews was completed before launching data collection to validate the programming of the questionnaire in both English and French.

Léger adheres to the most stringent guidelines for quantitative research. The survey instrument was compliant with the *Standards for the Conduct of Government of Canada Public Opinion Research—Series D—Quantitative Research*.

A complete methodological description is provided in Appendix A .

Overview of the Findings

- Confidence in Elections Canada is high. More than three-quarters (78%) of respondents have confidence in this institution, including 27% who have a great deal of confidence. Trust in Elections Canada is higher than confidence in the police, the media and other levels of government.
- A strong majority of respondents (87%) say they believe that Elections Canada conducts fair elections. Respondents who do not believe that Elections Canada conducts fair elections are mainly concerned with the integrity and security of the process and the distribution of seats, do not trust governments and politicians or are dissatisfied with the conduct or results of elections. A large minority of those who do not believe that Elections Canada conducts fair elections (35%) say they have no particular reason for believing that Elections Canada runs elections somewhat or very unfairly.
- The spread of false information online is seen as one of the factors that can have the most impact on the upcoming election. More than three-quarters of respondents (78%) think so. Smaller majorities express concern about the influence of a foreign country through social media and other means (61%) as well as the hacking of voting systems by a foreign country (55%).
- Three-quarters of respondents think that the voting system in Canada is safe and reliable (74%), while 17% think the voting system in Canada is prone to fraud and 9% do not know. These proportions change when respondents consider only voting by mail. Half of Canadians think voting by mail is safe and reliable (51%), while one-third of Canadians (32%) think voting by mail is prone to fraud and 17% do not know.

- When asked about the frequency of different types of voter fraud, respondents were most likely to believe that an individual impersonating someone else happens sometimes or often (39%). Fewer respondents thought it was common for non-citizens to vote (35%), for someone to vote more than once (29%) or for someone to steal or tamper with ballots after they had been cast (25%).
- Respondents were presented with three conspiracy statements. Less than half of the respondents (42%) believe in none of the conspiracy theories presented in the survey, while 40% of the respondents have mixed conspiracy beliefs and 18% hold strong conspiracy beliefs. Indeed, 40% of respondents believe that “certain significant events have been the result of the activity of a small group who secretly manipulate world events.” Three Canadians out of 10 (30%) believe that “experiments involving new drugs or technologies are routinely carried out on the public without their knowledge or consent.” Finally, 17% of Canadians believe that “the government is trying to cover up the link between vaccines and autism.”
- Television remains the most popular medium for news about current events (35%). It is followed by online news sites or mobile apps (29%). Other traditional news media are consulted by far fewer respondents: radio (8%) and newspapers or print magazines (3%).

Notes on the Interpretation of the Research Findings

The views and observations expressed in this document do not reflect those of Elections Canada. This report was compiled by Léger based on the research conducted specifically for this project. This research is not probabilistic: the results cannot be applied to the general population of Canada.

Comparisons with the results of the 2019 National Electors Study (NES) are included when possible, with the caveat that some part of the observable differences between the 2019 NES and this survey might be explained by differences in the research design, including the survey modes and samples used in each study and the timing of measurements. Future waves of the survey will be used to track these measures over time.

Since a sample drawn from an Internet panel is not probabilistic in nature, margins of sampling error cannot be calculated for this survey. Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who had volunteered to participate or registered to participate in online surveys. The results of such surveys cannot be described as statistically projectable to the target population. The data have been weighted to reflect the demographic composition of the target population.

Political Neutrality Statement and Contact Information

Léger certifies that the final deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada's political neutrality requirements outlined in its *Policy on Communications and Federal Identity* and the *Directive on the Management of Communications*.

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 leader.



Signed:

Christian Bourque, Senior Researcher

Léger