ENVIRONICS
RESEARCH

Elector Personas

Executive Summary

Prepared for Elections Canada

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Executive Summary

A. Background and Objectives

Elections Canada (EC) is an independent, non-partisan agency that reports directly to Parliament. EC exercises general direction and supervision over the conduct of elections and referendums at the federal level.

As part of the 2020–2028 Elections Canada Strategic Plan, the agency is adopting user-centric design methods to develop programs and services that are easy to use. This is part of a broader commitment to better understand who it serves and to ensure its programs and services address their individual needs, wants, and abilities.

The intention behind creating personas is so that EC can clearly envision who the agency is designing experiences for and understand electors' personalities, motivations, and goals. The personas will enable EC to make the end users more central to the design of services and products.

Elections Canada commissioned Environics Research to develop a set of user personas that are evidence-informed, engaging, and whose content will help the agency improve its services and communications for electors, its engagement with various groups and communities, and its thinking about the medium- and long-term future of elections in Canada.

To this end, successful elector personas should be grounded in data. Environics first conducted secondary analysis of survey data from EC's National Electors Study for the 43rd federal general election held in 2019 (NES 2019) to distinguish electors based on their behavioural, attitudinal, and socio-demographic characteristics, and then conducted primary qualitative research with electors who embodied a variety of characteristics.

B. Methodology

The project proceeded in two main steps: secondary analysis of EC survey data to identify elector target groups of interest, followed by qualitative research that provided the basis for the personas.

Secondary analysis. The secondary analysis used data from Elections Canada's National Elector Study 2019 (NES 2019) and provided insight into segments of electors and reasoning behind voting or not voting. This analysis focused on 10 groups of electors, including voters and potential voters (those who are open to voting but haven't recently). Each group was profiled in terms of their responses to a set of indicators covering the electoral process, reasons for not voting, efforts to vote and perceptions of difficulty, demographics and psychographics. This secondary analysis helped guide the design of qualitative research and eventual persona development.

Bulletin board and individual in-depth interviews. From August 10–13, 2021, Environics hosted an online bulletin board with 62 Canadians participating in both English and French. The research included several activities, such as journey mapping, and/or scenarios, polls, etc. Once complete, this was supplemented with 26 in-depth individual interviews (IDIs) focused on specific audiences for whom a bulletin board approach was not appropriate, such as electors with low literacy or those with no home internet access.

Participants were screened and selected based on the secondary research and in consultation with Elections Canada. A recruitment screener was utilized to achieve a balance between voters and non-voters, age groups, region, gender, level of tech-savviness (meaning level of comfort using computers, cell phones, and the internet) and agreed-upon quotas with target groups. These target groups included:

1. non-binary or transgender identity

2. First Nations (on- and off-reserve)

3. Western Métis

4. Inuit

5. new Canadian from a country with a functioning but different electoral democracy

6. new Canadian from a country with a weak or non-existent electoral democracy

7. snowbirds

8. single parents with children under the age of 12

9. electors with low literacy in English and French

10. electors with no home internet access

11. electors with a moderate or severe mobility limitation

12. electors with a moderate or severe visual disability

13. electors with a moderate or severe mental health diagnosis

From the interviews and bulletin board exercise, a total of nine personas were developed, each structured around their goals, motivations, and barriers. In developing the personas, we also considered the way electors may consume information and media and relate to self-service digital environments, their key socio-demographic characteristics, and quantified features such as literacy/education, interest in politics, values, etc.

Statement of limitations: Qualitative research provides insight into the range of opinions held within a population, rather than the weights of the opinions held, as would be measured in a quantitative study. The results of this type of research should be viewed as indicative, rather than projectable to the population.

C. Contract Value

The contract value was $84,629.27 (HST included).

D. Key Findings

Barriers to Voting

One of the objectives of the research was to identify and group electors into personas based on common goals, motivations, and obstacles in relation to the electoral process. In the context of this research, these obstacles, or "barriers to voting," can be understood as any combination of personal factors, perceptions, attitudes, or experiences related to the voting process or political participation that might increase the difficulty of voting for a person or the likelihood that they may not vote.

The following general types of barriers were identified from the qualitative and quantitative research:

- **Trust/ideological**: Feeling distrustful of politicians, political parties and/or the political system is a major barrier for members of this group, resulting in disengagement. They do not see people like themselves, or their needs or interests, reflected in the political process. Possibly they may have voted at some point in

their lives and felt disappointed that an elected candidate did not keep their promises. Whatever their past experience, Canadians with this barrier struggle to motivate themselves to vote.

- **Disconnected**: Members of this group struggle to relate to an election because they don't see how it connects to their everyday lives. They tend to lack knowledge about political parties and platforms, rather than about the process of voting. This lack of knowledge can result in feeling disconnected from federal elections and disengaged from politics overall. To feel compelled to vote, it may help the disconnected to see how the results of an election can impact their day-to-day lives.

- **Unpredictability**: Canadians lead busy lives with multiple work and family responsibilities. The unpredictability of the wait times they may encounter at their polling place, and the cascading effect on their carefully planned schedules, can be frustrating to members of this group. Being "too busy" or overwhelmed with work or childcare are two reasons that may cause a Canadian in this group to miss out on voting.

- **Anxiety**: Canadians who often feel general anxiousness or worry about complexity might be more discouraged by the surprises of daily life than others. A forecast of bad weather, for example, might make a member of this group feel defeated. They are prone to stress over matters others may find trivial, such as the correct way to mark their ballot or the lack of parking spots at the polling place. (Note that this reflects a general worldview, and not that these individuals have been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder).

- **Excluded**: Canadians who are a member of a minority group may encounter friction points in a process that was originally designed to serve the majority of Canadian voters. One example is those who have changed their names or identities in some way (reflecting such varied experiences as divorced individuals and members of the trans community). Inaccurate personal information on the voter registration list, and thus on their VICs, results in frustration and potentially feelings of exclusion from the voting process. Compared with other Canadians, members of this group may encounter extra checks of their identification, which can contribute to feeling singled out at the polls.

- **Inexperience**: Likely to be a new Canadian or a first-time voter, members of this group could benefit from more information about voting earlier on. Members of this group are engaged and passionate about elections, and a voting information package specifically for new citizens (for instance) could help them more effectively navigate this first-time process. Moreover, once empowered with more information, they may be inclined to share it with family and community members.

- **Accessibility**: Canadians who require additional support to vote (for example, due to a physical or intellectual disability) are subject to feeling frustrated at election time. While they know how, when, and where to vote, members of this group advocate for change to ensure they can participate independently, just like other Canadians. Providing fully accessible advance poll and voting day locations, adequate accessible parking spots, and ballots in Braille or large print are changes that would be noticed and appreciated by those who experience some form of this barrier.

- **No barrier**: Accounting for most Canadians, members of this group consider the voting process to be easy. They are familiar with the process and feel they have the right amount of knowledge to cast their ballot year after year.

Elector Personas

Nine elector personas were developed based on each of the identified barriers and other elector characteristics. The nine personas are summarized below:

"Angela Reid" – Skeptic
Voting importance: Not very important
Voting method: N/A
Next election: Unlikely to vote
Past election: Did not vote
Primary emotion: Negative
Barriers: Trust/ideological
Disability: N/A
Age: Across age groups

"Tony Castilano" – Follower
Voting importance: Not very important
Voting method: Election day
Next election: May or may not vote
Past election: Did not vote
Primary emotion: Neutral
Barriers: Disconnect
Disability: N/A
Age: 18–24

"Joseph Kasongo" – Changemaker
Voting importance: Very important
Voting method: Election day
Next election: Will definitely vote
Past election: Was not eligible
Primary emotion: Positive
Barriers: Inexperience
Disability: N/A
Age: Across age groups

"Casey Tremblay" – Planner
Voting importance: Somewhat important
Voting method: Advance polls
Next election: Likely to vote
Past election: Voted
Primary emotion: Neutral
Barriers: Unpredictability
Disability: N/A
Age: 18–44

"Alix Chen" – Individualist
Voting importance: Very important
Voting method: Election day
Next election: Will definitely vote

Past election: Voted
Primary emotion: Neutral
Barriers: Exclusion
Disability: N/A
Age: Not clear

"Ajeet Kaur" – Thinker
Voting importance: Very important
Voting method: Election day
Next election: Will definitely vote
Past election: Voted
Primary emotion: Neutral
Barriers: Anxiety
Disability: N/A
Age: Across age groups

"Andrea Reyes" – Champion
Voting importance: Very important
Voting method: Election day
Next election: Will definitely vote
Past election: Voted
Primary emotion: Positive
Barriers: Accessibility
Disability: Yes
Age: 45+

"Nia Morrison" – Idealist
Voting importance: Very important
Voting method: Advance poll
Next election: Will definitely vote
Past election: Voted
Primary emotion: Positive
Barriers: N/A
Disability: N/A
Age: 18–34

"Tim Robinson" – Traditionalist
Voting importance: Very important
Voting method: Advance poll/Election day
Next election: Will definitely vote
Past election: Voted
Primary emotion: Positive
Barriers: N/A
Disability: N/A
Age: 65+

E. Political Neutrality Statement and Contact Information

I hereby certify as senior officer of Environics that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada 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.

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