



Office of the
Commissioner of
Official Languages

Commissariat
aux langues
officielles

Public Opinion Research Methodology Report

September 2024

Public Opinion Research Methodology Report Final Report

This public opinion research report presents the results of quantitative research conducted by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada and Prairie Research Associates (PRA). PRA provided data while the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages undertook the analysis and production of this report.

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Overview

The Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages (the Office of the Commissioner) hired Prairie Research Associates (PRA) to conduct a public opinion survey to get a more accurate picture of:

- Canadians' level of awareness of the Office of the Commissioner's mandate and activities; and
- the public's views on certain emerging issues affecting official languages.

Methodological approach

To conduct the survey, PRA completed the following steps.

- **Survey review and testing.** The Office of the Commissioner provided PRA with a draft survey questionnaire in English. PRA reviewed the draft, made suggestions to improve wording and flow, and added questions to ensure that the project scope and objectives were met. After approving the questions, the Office of the Commissioner translated the survey questions into French. PRA then pre-tested the survey by telephone (random digit) in English and French on February 29, 2024, with 11 respondents. In consultation with the Office of the Commissioner, PRA made slight changes to the questionnaire based on the pre-test results to improve survey flow and participants' understanding of the questions. The final survey questionnaire is presented in Appendix A.
- **Survey.** PRA conducted the survey using random-digit dialling across Canada—which ensured a representative sample by region, age and gender—and reached a total sample of 900 respondents.
- **Weighting.** All survey results were weighted by gender, age and province/territory using Statistics Canada data from the 2021 Census.

Respondents' first official language learned (Q5) was considered for weighting. However, it was deemed unnecessary because the data weighted with other factors (gender, age, province/territory) already aligned overall results with national data from the Census for English and French speaking populations by first official language spoken.

- **Analysis.** Caution should be exercised when analyzing results according to language of survey. It is not unusual for a modest number of respondents to complete a survey in their second official language, but the number of responses in French was particularly small in this case (n=77) relative to the total sample (n=900) and compared to the total number who identified French as their first official language learned (n=155). Therefore, analysis by first official language

learned (Q5) has been privileged over analysis by language of survey in the present report.

Table 1 shows a summary of the methodology used for this survey.

Table 1: Methodology summary

Pre-test (telephone)	February 29, 2024
Survey dates	March 4–30, 2024
Completed surveys	900
Average completion time (minutes:seconds)	12:42
Error rate (95% confidence interval)	± 3.3%
Response rate	5%
Survey type	Random (probability)

The Office of the Commissioner received a detailed set of “banner tables” under separate cover that presented the results for all questions by population segments as defined by region and demographics. The specific results to which the following analysis refers have been taken from these tables.

Observations

Unless otherwise specified, the following observations are based on the total sample (n=900) or on first official language learned (Q5: English or, for convenience, “Anglophones,” n=741; and French or, for convenience, “Francophones,” n=155), and the percentages referred to are from the weighted results.

Awareness of language rights (Q6) and who to contact (Q7)

Most respondents agreed that they are generally aware of their language rights (87% of Anglophones; 85% of Francophones).

Among those who are aware of their language rights, Francophones agreed to a greater extent than Anglophones (62% compared to 42%) that they know who to contact if their rights under the *Official Languages Act* are not being respected.

The results appear to be less favourable among official language minority populations, especially when it comes to knowing who to contact regarding their rights. This is of potential significance because the language rights of members of official language minority communities (OLMCs) are potentially more at risk by virtue of their minority status.

This finding was produced by isolating populations by region (Quebec vs. Canada outside Quebec) and analyzing the results according to first official language learned

(Q5). Analyzing according to Q5 instead of language of survey is particularly necessary for Francophones outside Quebec because almost all of them completed the survey in English. The OLMC respondent numbers are admittedly small (n=100: 50 Anglophones in Quebec, 50 Francophones outside Quebec), so the results should be read with some caution.

Among Francophone respondents from outside Quebec (n=50):

- 7% completed the survey in French (93% in English)
- 75% agree that they are generally aware of their language rights under the *Official Languages Act*, among whom 48% agree that they know who to contact if their rights are not being respected.

Among Anglophone respondents from Quebec (n=50):

- 100% completed the survey in English (0% in French)
- 83% agree that they are generally aware of their language rights under the *Official Languages Act*, among whom 30% agree that they know who to contact if their rights are not being respected.

According to this analysis, OLMC members may be less aware of their language rights than members of official language majority communities, and less than half of those respondents seemed to know who to contact if their rights are not being respected. In addition, if language of survey is any indication, members of French OLMCs seem to be significantly less likely to exercise (or be able to exercise) their federal official languages rights (given that only 7% completed the survey in French).

Importance of official languages (Q8 and Q9)

A high percentage of survey respondents agreed that supporting the use of both official languages in Canada is important to them (78% of Anglophones and 96% of Francophones). The percentages were similar for respondents who agreed that supporting the use of both official languages in Canada is important to Canadians (77% of Anglophones and 88% of Francophones).

Official languages and leadership (Q10)

72% of Anglophones, and 93% of Francophones agreed that senior government officials, such as commissioners, ombudspersons or heads of agencies, should be able to communicate effectively in both English and French.

Official languages learning opportunities (Q11)

Among Anglophones, 73% agreed that they have had the opportunity to learn French (although respondents were not asked how extensive that opportunity was). Among Francophones, 86% agreed that they have had the opportunity to learn English.

There is an even greater difference when comparing the percentage of respondents who “strongly” agreed that they have had the opportunity to learn their second official language: 48% of Anglophones compared to 72% of Francophones.

Comfort interacting in the second official language (Q12)

Among those who agreed that they have had the opportunity to learn the other official language, Francophones indicated to a far greater extent that they feel comfortable interacting in the other official language (86% of Francophones indicated that they were “very” or “somewhat” comfortable, compared to 37% of Anglophones).

Again, the contrast is more marked when comparing the percentage of respondents who selected “very comfortable”: 60% of Francophones compared to 11% of Anglophones.

Error rates

Table 2 shows the error rates for the demographic groups included in the survey.

Table 2: Error rates

Group	n-size	Error rate (based on 95% CI)
Region		
Atlantic	100	± 9.8%
Quebec	156	± 7.8%
Ontario	259	± 6.1%
Manitoba/Saskatchewan	112	± 9.3%
Alberta	127	± 8.7%
British Columbia / Territories	146	± 8.1%
Age		
18 to 34	129	± 8.6%
35 to 54	294	± 5.7%
55 and older	473	± 4.5%
Gender		
Man (male)	416	± 4.8%
Woman (female)	479	± 4.5%
Annual household income		
< \$30,000	56	± 13.1%
\$30,000 to \$59,999	124	± 8.8%
\$60,000 to \$99,999	184	± 7.2%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	107	± 9.5%
\$150,000 or more	103	± 9.7%
First language learned		
English	741	± 3.6%

French	155	± 7.9%
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Response rate

Table 3 shows the call record for the survey.

Table 3: Call outcomes

Outcome		N	%
A	Total numbers attempted	67,830	
1.	Not in service	22,495	
2.	Fax	200	
3.	Business	372	
	Remaining	44,763	
B	Total eligible numbers	44,763	
4.	Busy	1,435	
5.	Answering machines	23,072	
6.	No answer	11,764	
7/8.	Language/illness/incapability	402	
9.	Selected/eligible respondent not available	78	
	Remaining	8,012	
C	Total asked	8,012	
10.	Household refusal	744	
11.	Respondent refusal	4,791	
12.	Qualified respondent break off	96	
	Remaining	2,381	
D	Cooperative contacts	2,381	
13.	Disqualified	1,481	
14.	Completed interviews	900	
	Refusal rate = (10+11+12)/C	5,631/8,012	70%
	Response rate (D/B)	2,381/44,763	5%

Appendix A – Questionnaire

Hello, I am calling from Prairie Research Associates, a national research firm. We are conducting a short three-minute survey about language use in Canada. This survey has been registered with the Canadian Research Insights Council. Do you have a few minutes to do the survey with me?

Yes

No **[END]**

Would you prefer to complete the survey in English or French?

English

French

Section 1: Screening and initial demographics

First, just a few questions to ensure we are speaking to a diverse mix of Canadians.

1. To confirm, what province or territory do you live in?

- Alberta
- British Columbia
- Manitoba
- New Brunswick
- Newfoundland and Labrador
- Northwest Territories
- Nova Scotia
- Nunavut
- Ontario
- Prince Edward Island
- Quebec
- Saskatchewan
- Yukon
- Prefer not to answer

2. Which of the following age groups do you fall into?

- 18 to 24
- 25 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65 and older
- Prefer not to answer

3. What gender do you identify as?

- Man (male)
- Woman (female)

- Other gender identity
 - Prefer not to answer
4. Which of the following groups best represents your household's total annual income?
- Less than \$30,000
 - \$30,000 to less than \$60,000
 - \$60,000 to less than \$100,000
 - \$100,000 to less than \$150,000
 - \$150,000 or more
 - Prefer not to answer
5. Which official language of Canada did you first learn to speak?
- English
 - French
 - Prefer not to answer

Section 2: Attitudes

I am going to read you a series of statements. For each, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree.

6. I am generally aware of my language rights.
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Somewhat agree
 - c. Somewhat disagree
 - d. Strongly disagree
 - e. Not sure / Prefer not to answer
7. **[ASK IF AGREE]** I know who to contact if I feel my language rights under the *Official Languages Act* are not being respected.
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Somewhat agree
 - c. Somewhat disagree
 - d. Strongly disagree
 - e. Not sure / Prefer not to answer
8. Supporting the use of both official languages in Canada is important to me.
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Somewhat agree
 - c. Somewhat disagree
 - d. Strongly disagree
 - e. Not sure / Prefer not to answer
9. Supporting the use of both official languages in Canada is important to Canadians.
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Somewhat agree
 - c. Somewhat disagree

- d. Strongly disagree
 - e. Not sure / Prefer not to answer
10. Senior federal government officials, such as commissioners, ombudspersons or heads of agencies, should be able to communicate effectively in both English and French.
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Somewhat agree
 - c. Somewhat disagree
 - d. Strongly disagree
 - e. Not sure / Prefer not to answer
11. I have had the opportunity to learn **[English/French]**. **[RECALL BASED ON OPPOSITE LANGUAGE IN Q5. SKIP IF NO RESPONSE TO Q5]**
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Somewhat agree
 - c. Somewhat disagree
 - d. Strongly disagree
 - e. Not sure / Prefer not to answer
12. **[IF AGREE]** To what extent do you feel comfortable interacting in **[ENGLISH/FRENCH]**?
Are you...
- a. Very comfortable
 - b. Somewhat comfortable
 - c. Somewhat uncomfortable
 - d. Very uncomfortable
 - e. Not sure / Prefer not to answer