



Award date: 2016-10-31

Contract # 35035-165058/001/CY

POR 061-16

POR@PCO-BCP.gc.ca



Privy Council Office Continuous Qualitative Data Collection of Canadians' Views – Wave 12 of Focus Groups

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
December, 2017


Ipsos Public Affairs
1 Nicholas Street, Suite 1400
Ottawa ON K1N 7B7
Tel: 613.241.5802
Fax: 613.248.7981
www.ipsos.ca

« Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français »



Political Neutrality Statement

I hereby certify as Senior Officer of Ipsos 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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Colledge". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

Mike Colledge
President
Ipsos Public Affairs

1. Executive Summary

Background and Objectives

The Privy Council Office (PCO) is the hub of non-partisan, public service support to the Prime Minister and Cabinet and its decision-making structures. Led by the Clerk of the Privy Council, PCO helps the Government implement its vision and respond effectively and quickly to issues facing the government and the country.

As an advisor to the Prime Minister, PCO brings together quality, objective policy advice and information to support the Prime Minister and Cabinet, including information on the priorities of Canadians. To this end, the Communications and Consultation Secretariat within PCO supports the Prime Minister’s Office in coordinating government communications and setting broad government communications themes and messages, in accordance with government priorities, as determined by the Prime Minister, Cabinet, Cabinet committees and the Clerk of the Privy Council. The Secretariat also works with PCO policy secretariats to advise and support Cabinet and its committees.

In fulfilling its mandate, PCO required an ongoing cycle of qualitative data collection to ensure that it has up-to-date representations of Canadians’ opinions on macro-level issues that are of interest to the government, such as their views on what should be the priorities of the government. Additionally, such research increases the Government of Canada’s understanding of emerging trends, and measures Canadians’ views on key national issues and policy initiatives.

Through the use of an ongoing cycle of focus groups, PCO is gaining a solid understanding of Canadians’ views as they relate to the most important issues facing the country; their perceptions of how the federal government can best address these issues; expectations of actions related to government priorities; and, perspectives on how the government can most effectively convey its efforts in dealing with emerging issues. This research helps inform the development of communications messages, products and dissemination tactics to respond to priority issues. Additionally, the research allows the Government of Canada to develop and refine communications activities to meet the specific needs of Canadians with timely, up-to-date, easily understood information based on the current perceptions of Canadians in the requisite areas.

This twelfth wave of ongoing qualitative research was meant to gather feedback from Canadians on select issues and policy areas that are important to the Government of Canada. The issues discussed during focus groups differed from one location to the next. Topics covered included:

- Government of Canada Actions
- Democracy
- Pensions
- Electric Cars
- Superclusters
- Tax Havens
- Salmon
- Guns

Overview of Methodology

This wave of qualitative research was comprised of a series of 6 focus groups with Canadians aged 20 years old and above, held between December 4th and December 14th. All group discussions lasted approximately two hours and were conducted in the evening, with the first session in each city starting at 5:30pm and the second starting at 7:30pm. These sessions were held in the following locations:

- December 4th- Guelph
- December 7th- London
- December 11th- Winnipeg
- December 11th- Bathurst
- December 12th Vancouver
- December 14th- Trois-Rivières

A total of 12 participants were recruited for each session to ensure that a minimum of eight to ten participants would attend. In total, 122 participants took part in the discussions. All participants received an honorarium of \$75 for attending the sessions at the focus group facilities. The screening questionnaire helped ensure that participants included a good cross-section of the general population, with good mixes of gender, ages, education and income levels, as well as household composition. Additional methodological details can be found in the appendix of this report.

This twelfth wave of research is part of a continuous qualitative research project that will include a total of 144 focus groups to be held in multiple waves over the 2017 calendar year, with the option of renewing the cycle of research for two additional years. The contracted amount for this research project for calendar year 2017 is \$916,865.05, including HST.

Key Findings

Democracy

During an exercise on government actions to improve democracy in Canada, participants favoured actions that had the potential to include programs and initiatives to increase education and knowledge of the political process and government. These were *increasing the level of Canadians’ understanding about democracy* and *increasing voter participation in elections*. When asked about an independent commission to oversee the rules and organization around leaders’ debates, reactions were mixed. Some felt debates were often chaotic and would benefit from more structure and an increased sense of transparency. Others felt that debates were only a small portion of the electoral process, watched by few, and as a result, did not need a commission.

Creative Canada

Participants in Trois-Rivières were questioned as to their awareness of the Government of Canada’s recently announced Creative Canada initiative. Unprompted awareness of the various elements of this initiative was relatively low except for general mentions of Netflix, specifically related to media reports that focussed on Netflix and what some characterized as the “Netflix tax”. Those who expressed familiarity with the issue surrounding Netflix generally referenced the company’s commitment to investing \$500 million dollars in original Canadian productions. Those in support of this Creative Canada initiative most often spoke of the job creation, economic benefits and opportunities for Canadian French language cultural products to flourish and be exported beyond our borders. Those who expressed reservations with the deal, questioned how truly advantageous it would be for Canada’s cultural industry over the long run. For these individuals they questioned whether it was fair that Netflix would not have to pay federal sales tax while other players in the cultural industry (i.e. Canadian telecommunications companies) would.

Pensions

Concerns about retirement security were greater for participants who stated they did not have a workplace pension. Reasons for concern included a changing economy and whether CPP funds will be available when they retire. There was overall agreement in most groups that the best way to secure a stable retirement would be for individuals to save money themselves rather than relying on an employer pension. When discussing the recent filing of bankruptcy by Sears, initially participants were in favour of government action to ensure current and pensioned Sears workers receive their full pensions or pension contributions to date. As the discussion progressed, participants wondered if the government’s reaction to Sears could set a costly precedent, and felt the government should focus on establishing a regulatory framework to prevent similar situations from occurring in the future.

Electric Cars

None of the participants recruited currently owned/operated a fully electric vehicle, mostly due to the perceived costs associated with such vehicles. Many indicated they were going to take a “wait and see approach” for purchasing an electric vehicle. Benefits to electric vehicles mainly focused on environment benefits, as well as the potential of lower operating costs than combustion engine powered vehicles (mentioned by those outside of Ontario). Potential downsides to using electric cars include the

environmental impacts of used electric fuel cells, the high cost of electricity (for those in Ontario), and the impact on the oil and gas industry in Canada. When asked about potential government support most favoured investments in infrastructure and GST rebates.

Superclusters

There was not a lot of unprompted awareness of ‘superclusters’, but once prompted most participants could name at least one. Those in Vancouver and Bathurst however, had a lower awareness, often likening superclusters to single sector economies such as logging communities. Benefits of superclusters included shared resources, combined knowledge, and job creation. Drawbacks included the risk of investing many jobs and resources into a single project. There was an overall favourability towards the \$950 million Superclusters Initiative of the federal government.

Tax Havens

While there was a high level of awareness of the term “tax havens” in all locations, participants were mostly unaware of the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA) taking any action on these issues. Participants were divided on the importance of this issue; some felt recovering this money could be well spent on government programs while others were skeptical the money would be recovered. Once provided information on the current efforts of the CRA to crack down on offshore tax havens, participants noted the CRA being on track to recuperate \$25 billion was a great return on the \$1 billion they had invested.

Salmon

Familiarity with the term aquaculture was higher in Vancouver than it was in Bathurst and Trois-Rivières. Many in Vancouver raised specific environmental concerns such as sea lice, and the potential for large amounts of waste to affect the surrounding waters and ecosystems. There was more favourability towards aquaculture practices in Bathurst and Trois-Rivières, especially when participants argued this practice might help protect declining wild fish stocks. During an exercise on important factors to consider for new aquaculture products participants chose environmental impact or health and safety of the fish and of consumers.

Guns

Participants in Bathurst and Guelph were comfortable with current gun control laws in Canada. When asked about a list of potential additional gun control measures participants were in favour of including them, while some participants thought some of the measures were already in place. The measures that generated the most discussion were: *require enhanced background checks for anyone seeking to purchase a restricted firearm, require a permit to transport handguns and restricted firearms, and implement a lifetime ban on gun possession for people who have committed violent crimes*. These measures were seen to be most effective in targeting the increase in gun misuse.

Note on Interpretation of Findings

Qualitative research is designed to reveal a rich range of opinions and interpretations rather than to measure what percentage of the target population holds a given opinion. These results must not be used to estimate the numeric proportion or number of individuals in the population who hold a particular opinion because they are not statistically projectable.

Focus group research on government priorities seeks to provide a deeper understanding of participants’ views, often complementing quantitative findings gathered through survey research. Discussions allow for deep probing on key issues that is not possible with quantitative research. This type of information is essential for the Privy Council Office in its role advising and supporting the Cabinet and its committees.