



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 9 of Focus Groups

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
October, 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.



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 seventh 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
- Asylum seekers
- Local Issues
- Housing
- Taxes
- Climate Change
- Sustainable Development Goals
- Disabilities

Overview of Methodology

This wave of qualitative research was comprised of a series of 12 focus groups with Canadians aged 20 years old and above, held between September 12th and September 28th, 2017. 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:

- September 12th – Sherbrooke
- September 13th – Saint John
- September 20th – Regina
- September 21st – Surrey (Vancouver)
- September 25th – Montreal
- September 28th – Barrie

A total of 12 participants were recruited for each session to ensure that a minimum of eight to ten participants would attend. In total, 121 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 ninth 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

Asylum Seekers

Awareness of asylum seekers crossing the Canada-United States border was relatively high in all locations, however those in Barrie were somewhat less aware. Most thought asylum seekers are coming to Canada because they were afraid of repercussions they could face if they stayed in the U.S. Overall views on asylum seekers can best be described as mixed; some wondered if they had a legitimate reason for entering Canada, while others were concerned about the financial impact on their community as well as resources spent by the federal government that might be better targeted to assist Canadians in need. It should be noted however that participants in Montreal, Sherbrooke and Barrie had more positive reactions to asylum-seekers compared to their counterparts in other cities. More specifically, they expressed pride and appreciation for steps taken by the federal government in order to address this situation.

Local Issues

During a discussion on local issues in Surrey, concerns related to mental health issues, homelessness, cost of housing, drug use, and inadequate transportation infrastructure were most often raised. When further prompted with a list of issues that might be of concern to them, participants’ reactions were mixed. They were not overly concerned with the issues of the relationship between the Port of Vancouver and truckers, and rules around Uber as they could not relate to these issues while other issues such as toll roads and toll bridges in the Lower Mainland, crime, opioids, and housing were seen as important and in need of improvements.

Housing

Housing issues were discussed in Surrey, Montreal and Barrie. When presented with a list of words to describe the Government of Canada’s focus on housing, participants had positive associations with the terms *affordable housing* and *cooperative housing*, associating the terms with subsidized and shared responsibility housing respectively. *Affordable housing* and *cooperative housing* were also the most favoured terms to use for government investments. The terms *public housing* and *not-for-profit housing* were not as familiar to participants overall and tended to have negative connotations associated with them. Participants often used words such as ‘poor’ and ‘run-down’ when reacting to these terms.

Taxes

Participants in Sherbrooke, Saint John, Regina, Montreal and Barrie discussed taxes and changes to the tax system in Canada. Overall, participants in all locations struggled with the information provided. Generally speaking, participants agreed in principle with the idea that the government should work to close loopholes in the tax system that most commonly benefit the wealthiest Canadians. As such most felt proposed changes to the system that addressed this problem were generally appropriate. However, participants were much less likely to be in favour of proposed changes if they meant small business owners, family businesses, and family farms would be negatively affected. Participants in Saint John and Regina noted these individuals were not doing anything illegal but rather, using the system to support themselves and their families.

Climate Change

Those in Surrey were led through a discussion on Government of Canada’s environmental initiatives. Some were aware of carbon pricing and were overall in favour, but were not sure about the specific plan and strategy presented by the federal government. Favoured uses of the funds collected were supporting the transition to alternative energy, direct rebates, and healthcare funding. Participants, unprompted, were concerned with environmental issues such as illegal dumping of garbage, water bottling plants, corporate emissions, and poaching of fish, sea, and marine life among other issues. Of those issues prompted by the moderator, water quality was of most concern to participants.

Sustainable Development Goals

Few participants were familiar with Sustainable Development Goals, in fact, many struggled with what exactly was meant by ‘sustainable development’. Furthermore, there was no clear consensus as to which of the goals presented the Government of Canada should be focusing on. When asked about achievements the Government of Canada should highlight in the international community, our education system, clean water, sustainable cities and healthcare system were suggested. To raise awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals, participants felt that the government should focus on a social media strategy, along with promotions at local events across the country. Participants offered a range of possible Canadian spokespersons in order to promote Canada’s Sustainable Development Goals. Some favoured a government representative, while others felt a notable Canadian would be more appropriate.

Disabilities

When presented with a list of possible Government of Canada actions to support those with disabilities, solutions such as *transportation and mobility solutions*, and *improving access to employment for people with disabilities* were top choices as participants felt these types of solutions would help to improve the overall lives of those with disabilities.

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.