



Government
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du Canada

Continuous Qualitative Data Collection of Canadians' Views – January 2022

Executive Summary

Prepared for the Privy Council Office

Supplier name: The Strategic Counsel

Contract number: 35035-182346/001/CY

Contract value: \$2,428,991.50

Award date: December 16, 2021

Delivery date: March 17, 2022

Registration number: POR-005-19

For more information on this report, please email por-rop@pco-bcp.ca

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Canada 

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Communications and Consultation Secretariat of the Privy Council Office (PCO) commissioned The Strategic Counsel (TSC) to conduct continuous cycles of focus group research across the country with members of the public on key national issues, events, and policy initiatives related to the Government of Canada.

The broad purpose of this ongoing qualitative research program is three-fold: to explore the dimensions and drivers of public opinion on the most important issues facing the country; to assess perceptions and expectations of the federal government's actions and priorities, and; to inform the development of Government of Canada communications so that they continue to be aligned with the perspectives and information needs of Canadians, while remaining both clear and easy-to-understand.

The research is intended to be used by the Communications and Consultation Secretariat within PCO in order to fulfill its mandate of supporting the Prime Minister's Office in coordinating government communications. Specifically, the research will ensure that PCO has an ongoing understanding of Canadians' opinions on macro-level issues of interest to the government, as well as emerging trends.

This report includes findings from 12 online focus groups which were conducted between January 5th and January 27th, 2022 in multiple locations across the country, including Atlantic Canada, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. Details concerning the locations, recruitment, and composition of the groups are shown in the section below.

The research for this cycle of focus groups focused primarily on the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Participants were asked about their general COVID-19 outlook, their reactions to the rapidly spreading Omicron variant, and their perspectives on public health measures in their region as well as federal requirements related to international travel. In addition, some groups engaged in deeper conversations regarding federal pandemic-related financial supports, as well as the third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, otherwise known as the COVID-19 booster. Parents of children under the age of 12 residing on Vancouver Island and in Nova Scotia were additionally asked for their views on COVID-19 vaccines for young children, while groups in Ontario's Frontenac region, Alberta, Newfoundland, and Vancouver Island were asked to evaluate social media advertising concepts designed to promote uptake of a COVID-19 vaccine booster dose.

Participants in this wave of research were also asked for their views pertaining to a number of topics unrelated to the pandemic, including Canada's National Net-Zero Emissions Buildings Strategy, zero-emissions vehicles (ZEVs), small nuclear reactors (SMRs), and hydrogen-based energy. Other topics of focus included housing affordability and issues facing renters, Canadian content, opioids, child care, and youth issues.

As a note of caution when interpreting the results from this study, findings of qualitative research are directional in nature only and cannot be projected with any statistical accuracy or degree of confidence on to the overall population under study.

Methodology

Overview of Groups

Target audience

- Canadian residents, 18 and older.
- Groups were split primarily by location.
- Some groups focused on specific subgroups of the population including young adults aged 18-29, parents of children under 12, prospective homeowners, and first-generation immigrants.

Detailed Approach

- 12 focus groups were held across various regions in Canada.
- Four groups were conducted with the general population in Frontenac region in Ontario, Newfoundland, major centres in the Prairies, and northern Quebec.
- The other eight groups were conducted with key subgroups including:
 - Young adults, aged 18-29 residing in Alberta, the Wellington and Waterloo regions in Ontario, and the Mauricie region in Quebec
 - Parents of children under 12 from Vancouver Island and Nova Scotia
 - Prospective homeowners residing in major centres in Quebec and the Greater Toronto Area (GTA)
 - First-generation immigrants residing in British Columbia

- Groups in Quebec were conducted in French, while all others were conducted in English.
- All groups for this cycle were conducted online.
- A total of 8 participants were recruited for each group, assuming 6 to 8 participants would attend.
- Across all locations, 84 participants attended, in total. Details on attendance numbers by group can be found below.
- Each participant received an honorarium. The incentive ranged from \$100 to \$125 per participant, depending on the location and the composition of the group.

Group Locations and Composition

LOCATION	GROUP	LANGUAGE	DATE	TIME (EST)	GROUP COMPOSITION	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Frontenac Region – Ontario	1	English	Jan. 5	6:00-8:00 pm	General Population	8
Newfoundland	2	English	Jan. 6	4:30-6:30 pm	General Population	6
Alberta	3	English	Jan. 6	8:00-10:00 pm	Young Adults, aged 18-29	8
Vancouver Island	4	English	Jan. 11	9:00-11:00 pm	Parents of Children under 12	7
Greater Toronto Area (GTA)	5	English	Jan. 12	6:00-8:00 pm	Prospective Homeowners	6
Major Centres Quebec	6	French	Jan. 17	6:00-8:00 pm	Prospective Homeowners	8
British Columbia	7	English	Jan. 18	9:00-11:00 pm	First Generation Immigrants	8
Wellington and Waterloo Regions – Ontario	8	English	Jan. 19	6:00-8:00 pm	Young Adults, aged 18-29	7
Maurice Region – Quebec	9	French	Jan. 20	6:00-8:00 pm	Young Adults, aged 18-29	7
Major Centres Prairies	10	English	Jan. 24	7:00-9:00 pm	General Population	6
Nova Scotia	11	English	Jan. 25	5:00-7:00 pm	Parents of Children under 12	7
Northern Quebec	12	French	Jan. 27	6:00-8:00 pm	General Population	6
Total number of participants						84

Key Findings

Part I: COVID-19 Related Findings

Government of Canada in the News (All Locations)

Among recent federal government initiatives and announcements in the news in the month of January, those related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic were once again top of mind. Participants mentioned a number of recent actions taken by the federal government, including the procurement and distribution of rapid antigen test kits for at-home use, the approval and purchase by the federal government of a Pfizer pill (Paxlovid) for use in Canada, evolving rules related to international travel, and newly introduced financial supports, including wage subsidies, for those Canadians impacted by public health measures related to the spread of the Omicron variant.

In addition to pandemic-related news, some recalled hearing about a settlement between the federal government and Indigenous individuals and families seeking redress for past treatment under the federal child-welfare system, as well as an agreement to release thousands of records related to the historic residential school system. Participants also mentioned new investments towards resettlement services for newcomers and refugees, as well as ongoing discussions related to housing affordability and the likelihood of an interest rate increase by the Bank of Canada. Related to international issues, a number of participants mentioned the increasing tensions between Russia and Ukraine and the potential response from Canada and other North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members.

Government of Canada Priorities (British Columbia First-Generation Immigrants, Ontario Wellington and Waterloo Regions Young Adults, Quebec Mauricie Region Young Adults)

Asked what the Government of Canada should be focused on, apart from the COVID-19 pandemic, participants identified a number of areas they believed required greater attention. These included economic concerns related to inflation and supply chain delays, student debt, and housing affordability, as well as concerns regarding the environment and climate change, social issues such as reconciliation with Indigenous communities, child care, and mental health services.

COVID-19 Outlook and Vaccines (All Locations)

Omicron Variant (All Locations)

Many participants expressed concern about rising case levels amidst the continued spread of the Omicron variant. While some were increasingly worried about contracting the virus, many more mentioned the negative impact this latest wave could have on the economy and day-to-day lives of Canadians by prolonging public health measures such as lockdowns, capacity limits, and other

restrictions to normal life. A number of participants reported finding it increasingly difficult to function under public health requirements, such as working from home, online school, and the inability to engage in normal social activities. Others shared concerns regarding mental health, both for themselves and the public at large.

At the same time, many did have concerns directly related to the spread of the virus, especially with respect to the health of vulnerable populations and the state of the health care system, already perceived to be struggling to meet the health care needs of the population. It was also felt the increasing spread of the variant could disrupt the economy and lead to staff shortages in vital sectors such as education and health care.

Overall, opinions related to current public health measures ranged from highly supportive (especially in Newfoundland) to frustrated (particularly among young adults in Alberta and participants in Quebec). While there was little desire to see restrictions increased, when asked directly if their respective regions should loosen existing public health measures, most felt this should only happen gradually and not in the immediate future.

Discussing why, apart from the emergence of the Omicron variant, cases were presently rising at such a rapid rate, participants suggested a number of contributing reasons, including pandemic fatigue and complacency, perceptions of minimized risk from this latest variant, increased socialization and travel, colder weather leading to more time indoors, and a general lack of testing capacity.

Many participants indicated having changed their behaviour in response to the Omicron variant, taking actions such as limiting social interactions and the size of their personal 'bubble', using rapid tests prior to social gatherings, cancelling or postponing leisure activities such as sports and dining at restaurants, and switching to 'medical' or N95 masks. Discussing their outlook regarding the pandemic over the next few months, most felt the situation would likely remain on its current trajectory or could potentially become slightly worse. Though few participants felt the situation would substantially improve in the next few months, several were optimistic that cases would eventually plateau and decrease with the arrival of warmer weather, lessening the strain on the health care system.

COVID-19 Travel Measures & Considerations (Ontario Frontenac Region, Newfoundland, Alberta Young Adults)

Asked if they had heard of any recent actions by the Government of Canada related to international travel, only a few could recall anything specific, including the recent reinstatement of testing requirements for trips to the U.S. that were under 72 hours, temporary travel restrictions on certain southern African countries identified as 'hot spots', and new testing and vaccination rules for international students coming to Canada. Many were of the opinion that restrictions had been constantly changing in recent months, with a number of participants finding it difficult to keep up. A few were more critical of what they viewed as these somewhat inconsistent and confusing rules.

While those in Ontario and Alberta generally felt federal travel requirements were currently at about the right level, many in Newfoundland favoured tightening these restrictions, with a small number

believing non-essential travel should be prohibited entirely. Asked if they felt the travel restrictions introduced by the Government of Canada had been effective in limiting the spread of the Omicron variant, most felt they had not, believing they had been implemented too late and after the strain had been detected in numerous Canadian towns and cities.

COVID-19 Information (Ontario Frontenac Region, Newfoundland, Alberta Young Adults, GTA Prospective Homeowners, Major Centres Quebec Prospective Homeowners)

Participants identified a number of sources they typically utilize for information about COVID-19. These included traditional news outlets, public health authorities at the provincial and federal level, journal articles and podcasts featuring medical experts, social media platforms, and word of mouth from friends, family, and coworkers. While a large number in the groups from Quebec, Newfoundland, and the Frontenac region of Ontario reported actively seeking out news related to the pandemic, very few in Alberta or the Greater Toronto Area regularly did so. A number of participants mentioned having mostly disengaged from news regarding the pandemic, finding it to be overwhelming at times.

COVID-19 Booster Dose (Ontario Frontenac Region, Newfoundland, Alberta Young Adults)

Most in the Ontario group reported having already received their booster dose, while many in Newfoundland and Alberta were still waiting to be invited to book an appointment. With the exception of some from Alberta, almost all participants who had yet to receive their booster intended to get their third dose once it became available. For those with questions or concerns regarding the booster, most focused on potential side-effects, the possibility and impact of receiving a different brand of vaccine for their booster than their initial two doses, how many booster doses would likely be necessary in the long-term, and what the status was regarding vaccinations for children under 5. It was hoped that the Government of Canada would be able to provide further clarification on these fronts as more information became available.

COVID-19 Vaccines for Children (Vancouver Island Parents of Children under 12, Nova Scotia Parents of Children under 12)

These two groups comprised of parents discussed the Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty vaccine, which had recently been approved for use in children 5-11 years in age. All participants recalled having had conversations with their children about the COVID-19 vaccine and almost all reported having either already gotten their children vaccinated or intending to do so as soon as possible. For most, the primary motivating factors influencing their decision to vaccinate their children included a desire to protect their children and others from the virus, as well as ensuring their children could participate in social events where vaccines were required.

COVID-19 Vaccine Concept Testing (Frontenac Region, Newfoundland, Alberta Young Adults, Vancouver Island Parents of Children under 12)

Participants in four groups reviewed concepts for potential digital advertisements from the Government of Canada promoting uptake of the third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, otherwise known

as the booster dose. Participants were shown two different concepts, in storyboard form. Most groups were shown concepts “A” (“Inside Out”) and “B” (“Tune Up”), while the group from Vancouver Island was shown two different versions of Concept A. Asked about their own vaccination status and intentions regarding the booster dose, most in the Ontario group had already received their booster, while few from Alberta, Newfoundland, and Vancouver Island reported having done so. Most of these participants, however, were planning to get their booster and simply waiting for the opportunity to book an appointment. A small number in Alberta were somewhat more hesitant.

After viewing the concepts, most expressed a preference for Concept A, describing it as direct and to the point. Many also liked how the information and visuals in this concept focused on explaining the biological mechanisms behind the COVID-19 booster. Among those who saw two different versions of Concept A, while both were positively received, participants generally expressed a preference for the original (which showed how a booster dose produces more antibodies), rather than the alternative version (which showed a doctor explaining this same information). Discussing Concept B, while a few participants appreciated the lighthearted tone, most felt the analogy being used, comparing the human body to a car needing a tune-up, would not be especially appealing to most Canadians or effective in communicating why a booster dose was necessary.

COVID-19 Financial Supports (Frontenac Region, Newfoundland, Alberta Young Adults, Vancouver Island Parents of Children under 12, GTA Prospective Homeowners, Major Centres Quebec Prospective Homeowners, Wellington and Waterloo Regions Young Adults, Mauricie Region Young Adults, Major Centres Prairies, Nova Scotia Parents of Children under 12)

Asked to evaluate the Government of Canada’s performance in regards to providing financial support to Canadians and businesses impacted by COVID-19, participants were mostly positive, especially regarding early efforts related to the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB), as well as programs supporting small businesses. While some noted more recent efforts, such as the provision of ten days of paid sick leave for workers in federally regulated industries, there was a general sense among participants that the federal government’s response to supporting individuals and businesses during the latest Omicron wave had not been as active or strong.

Among those more critical of the federal government’s performance in this area, a number of participants felt there was an ongoing need for programs like the CERB and CRB among Canadian workers and believed these supports should have been continued. Others, by contrast, were of the opinion that these earlier benefits had been offered too widely and should have been more targeted with respect to eligibility. Moreover, some voiced concerns that federal pandemic-related supports may have had unintended consequences, feeling they had contributed to rising inflation and a perceived labour shortage in many regions.

Regarding more recent federal COVID-19 financial initiatives, participants were asked if they had heard of programs such as the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS), the Canada Worker Lockdown Benefit (CWLB), and the Local Lockdown Program (LLP). Across all groups, overall awareness of these programs was quite limited among participants.

Recent Federal Financial Supports (Ontario Frontenac Region, Newfoundland, Alberta Young Adults)

Provided with a description of the CWLB and LLP programs, most felt they were necessary and agreed with the federal government's decision to temporarily expand eligibility for these programs in the wake of new public health measures to contain the recent wave of COVID-19. Most, however, also felt more needed to be done. Specifically, a number of participants were of the view that the timelines for this expanded eligibility would likely need to be extended, given the current high rate of transmission of the Omicron variant. In regard to the CWLB program, many also felt the amount being offered (\$300/ week) was too low. In addition, regarding the LLP program, while most felt it was important to provide support to Canadian businesses, some voiced concerns as to whether sufficient oversight would be in place to ensure employers utilize these financial supports as intended.

Participants held mixed views as to whether the Government of Canada should be focusing on providing support directly to individuals or distributing financial assistance primarily to employers in the form of wage subsidies. While some felt it made the most sense to provide financial assistance directly to the individuals who needed it, others believed that wage subsidies would be more beneficial in helping to ensure the continued operations of businesses and their ability to keep people employed and prevent lay-offs.

Part II: Other Issues

Housing and Home Renting (GTA Prospective Homeowners, Major Centres Quebec Prospective Homeowners, British Columbia First-Generation Immigrants, Major Centres Prairies, Nova Scotia Parents of Children under 12, Northern Quebec)

Very few were able to recall any recent actions taken by the Government of Canada related to making housing more affordable. A number of participants, however, felt this was an important issue and one requiring further attention from the Government of Canada.

Shown a number of proposed or potential housing initiatives from the federal government, participants were asked to evaluate which they felt should be a priority. Among these, the First-Time Home Buyer Incentive received a high level of support from participants, as did the proposed national 'rent-to-own' program and increased funding towards repairing and building affordable housing units. In addition, many positively mentioned the proposed initiatives to temporarily ban non-recreational residential sales to foreign buyers as well as to prohibit the practice of 'blind bidding'.

Home Renting (Major Centres Prairies, Nova Scotia Parents of Children under 12, Northern Quebec)

Asked whether they felt the federal government had a role to play in regulating the cost of rent in Canada, most participants in these groups felt this was necessary given what they perceived to be an exceedingly overheated rental market.

Discussing potential actions that could be taken by the federal government, participants were asked whether the Government of Canada should provide subsidies or incentives to owners of rental housing in exchange for binding commitments to not raise rents. While most supported this idea, some were of the opinion that tenants, not landlords, should receive these subsidies.

Participants also discussed the idea of the federal government passing legislation prohibiting landlords from charging monthly rent above a certain amount. Though less popular than the previous proposal, this idea was supported by a number of participants. While some were concerned this kind of initiative could unfairly limit the ability of homeowners to utilize and profit from their properties, others felt this was a necessary step given what they viewed as the increasingly steep price of rentals.

Opioids (British Columbia First-Generation Immigrants)

Questioned about a recent plan by the City of Vancouver to gain approval from Health Canada for the decriminalization of small amounts of illicit drugs - shifting from a law enforcement model to one of harm reduction – none of the participants in this group were aware of this initiative.

Discussing the merits of this plan, participants widely felt that decriminalizing small amounts of illicit drugs could have a significant impact on helping those struggling with opioid addiction. Potential benefits identified by participants included decreasing the stigma faced by drug users, encouraging these individuals to seek treatment, reducing drug-related incarceration, and freeing up law enforcement resources to focus their attention elsewhere.

Asked what additional actions the Government of Canada could take to address the growing issue of opioid addiction, several ideas were put forward. These included taking steps to make mental health care more affordable and widely available, providing greater funding for rehabilitation programs, increased accountability for those illegally distributing these drugs, and further educating the public regarding the dangers of opioids.

Youth Issues (Wellington and Waterloo Regions Young Adults, Mauricie Region Young Adults)

Recalling recent actions taken by the Government of Canada to support young Canadians (related to COVID-19 or otherwise) several identified the financial supports provided to reduce the impact of pandemic-related closures and lay-offs, especially the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and the Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB). Participants were widely aware of these two programs and felt they had aided younger Canadians during the pandemic, enabling them to get by financially.

Questioned as to whether the Government of Canada was generally doing an effective job in addressing the concerns of young people, few felt the federal government prioritized youth in their decision making. In particular, federal communications towards young people received criticism, with some describing them as being primarily performative. Additionally, there was a perception that the Government of Canada's presence on platforms frequently used by young people such as Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok, was somewhat lacking and that not enough was being done to promote the various supports available for younger Canadians.

Asked to identify the most important issue they personally felt the Government of Canada should be focusing on, participants provided a number of responses related to housing affordability, expanded mental health services, affordable child care, and social equity issues related to race, gender, sexual identity, and reconciliation.

Canadian Content (Major Centres Prairies, Northern Quebec)

Prompted to share what came to mind upon hearing the phrase 'Canadian Content', participants mentioned Canadian television channels, films and television produced in Canada, Canadian news and literature, and educational content centred around Canadian perspectives and history.

With respect to viewing habits, most indicated they would be inclined to watch a film or television series if they knew it had been produced in Canada. Related to this, several felt it was important to give Canadian content a chance and support home-grown productions. While some participants said they would be more interested in listening to music they knew to be Canadian, it was felt by most that genre was typically more important than the nationality of the artist.

Questioned about the state of the Canadian television and film industry, participants expressed concern that it could be at risk, especially given the production delays and cancellations resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, which they heard had significantly impacted the industry's fiscal health and employment rate. Some also worried that interest in Canadian content could be dwindling among younger generations.

Participants were asked to evaluate and prioritize a list of federal government statements and potential initiatives related to the Canadian film industry. Almost all participants were in favour of the Government of Canada increasing its focus on protecting and supporting Canadian artists and creators and taking steps to protect Canadian content and stories. Many also were open to regulation regarding the presentation of Canadian content on 'web giants', taking steps for Canadian content to be more discoverable and showcased to a greater degree on these platforms. Very few participants selected modernizing the rules governing online content or making foreign-based web giants pay their 'fair share' to support Canadian creators.

Participants in both groups were largely against the idea of the Government of Canada playing a role in regulating the content available to Canadians on major online platforms, such as Spotify and Netflix. Several believed these kinds of decisions should be left to the consumer, and that the 'open market' should prevail. Participants widely felt that it would be preferable for the federal government to devote its resources to financially supporting Canadian artists and creators, and working to increase the overall presence of Canadian content, rather than actively regulating the types of content available to Canadians.

Child Care (Nova Scotia Parents of Children under 12)

Asked to identify the largest challenges related to child care in Nova Scotia, participants in this group mentioned a number of issues, including high costs, a lack of affordable options, a general lack of

available spaces, and concerns regarding cleanliness and the potential spread of illness in child care facilities.

Most were aware of a recent agreement between the Government of Canada and Nova Scotia to make child care more affordable for Nova Scotia families, with a number identifying the target of this deal being to make the cost of child care \$10 a day, on average, by 2025-26.

Almost all participants felt this agreement would be helpful for parents in Nova Scotia. Citing the lower costs and pledge to increase available child care spaces, many believed this deal would make child care far more accessible, allowing many parents currently at home taking care of their children to return to work. This sentiment was shared both by parents with children of child care age as well as those whose children no longer required child care.

Net-Zero Emissions Building Strategy (Frontenac Region, Vancouver Island Parents of Children under 12, GTA Prospective Homeowners, Major Centres Quebec Prospective Homeowners, British Columbia First-Generation Immigrants, Wellington and Waterloo Regions Young Adults, Mauricie Region Young Adults, Major Centres Prairies, Nova Scotia Parents of Children under 12, Northern Quebec)

While there was little previous awareness of the Government of Canada's recent announcement to create a National Net-Zero Emissions Building Strategy, participants had a number of ideas about what this kind of strategy might involve. These included promoting a reduction in carbon emissions produced during the construction and operation of new buildings in Canada, providing financial incentives for businesses and households to implement building retrofits designed to conserve energy and reduce emissions, creating national energy efficiency standards for developers and builders, and providing an overall framework for shifting buildings and building construction away from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources.

To aid in discussion, participants were told that a 'net-zero' building was one that could produce as much energy as it consumed through the use of renewable energy sources. Components of the Net-Zero Emissions Building Strategy proposed by the federal government were described as including grants and financial supports for home and office retrofits, the renovation of federally owned buildings to be more energy efficient, a requirement that all new buildings be designed for net-zero emissions, and funding for Indigenous communities to build and retrofit buildings to be net-zero.

Participants generally supported these initiatives, feeling they could be helpful and were worth pursuing. This was especially the case regarding the proposals to provide financial incentives for individuals and businesses, which were received quite positively among participants. Many also reacted favourably to the idea of providing additional funding for Indigenous communities, enabling these communities to become more environmentally sustainable and investing in more resilient infrastructure. In addition to the environmental benefits, participants felt this strategy could also spur job creation in the green energy and construction sectors.

Presented with a number of alternate names for the National Net-Zero Emissions Building Strategy, participants in the English-speaking groups widely liked *Sustainable Building Strategy*, while the Francophone groups generally preferred the *Canadian Green Buildings Strategy*. Expanding on their reasoning, participants typically preferred those names that were concise, straightforward, and effectively conveyed the goals of the strategy.

Zero Emission Vehicles (Vancouver Island Parents of Children under 12, GTA Prospective Homeowners, Major Centres Quebec Prospective Homeowners, British Columbia First-Generation Immigrants, Wellington and Waterloo Regions Young Adults, Mauricie Region Young Adults, Major Centres Prairies, Northern Quebec)

Participants in these groups were asked to discuss zero-emissions vehicles (ZEVs), a class of automobiles that have the potential to produce no tailpipe emissions, including battery-electric, plug-in hybrid electric, and hydrogen-fuel-cell-powered vehicles.

Though very few reported either currently or previously owning a ZEV, a significant number said they would consider purchasing one in the future, with some having recently looked into doing so. Explaining their reasons for considering a ZEV, participants cited lower fuel costs, environmental benefits, financial incentives to switch to a ZEV, and leading-edge technology. Among the barriers associated with purchasing a ZEV, participants mentioned high purchase costs, potential challenges related to repairs, and concerns regarding range, charging stations, and infrastructure.

Participants were mixed in their reactions to a potential proposal by the Government of Canada to set a target requiring all new cars sold in Canada to be ZEVs by the year 2050. Many felt this was a reasonable goal and included a realistic time horizon, providing enough time to allow manufacturers and the public to adapt to these changes. That said, a significant number of participants were more hesitant, feeling the choice of what type of vehicle to purchase should ultimately be left to the consumer. Concerns were also expressed about whether ZEVs would be appropriate for all Canadian communities, particularly those in remote areas or typically experiencing extreme weather during the winter months. Asked if they would consider purchasing a ZEV by 2050 if the price of these vehicles was equivalent to those of gasoline-fueled automobiles, most felt that they would.

Small Nuclear Reactors (Vancouver Island Parents of Children under 12, GTA Prospective Homeowners, Major Centres Quebec Prospective Homeowners, British Columbia First-Generation Immigrants, Wellington and Waterloo Regions Young Adults, Mauricie Region Young Adults, Major Centres Prairies, Northern Quebec)

Participants were generally mixed in their initial impressions regarding whether the Government of Canada should increase its investments into nuclear power. Roughly as many were in favour of this idea as were skeptical or opposed to it, while most felt at least somewhat uncertain, expressing the desire to learn more about the subject matter prior to forming an opinion.

Proponents of nuclear energy generally described it as safe, efficient, and more environmentally-friendly relative to fossil fuels. Even these participants, however, tended to qualify their support, stating they did not wish to see nuclear energy prioritized over other renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydroelectricity. For those more worried about nuclear power, safety was the primary concern, both in regard to plant operations and the perceived challenges of disposing of nuclear waste. Some also questioned whether nuclear power was actually as 'clean' or environmentally friendly as often portrayed. Most, however, felt they could not decide if Canada should expand its use of nuclear energy without knowing more about the proposal, the technology, and the degree to which nuclear power is already utilized within Canada.

Asked about Small Nuclear Reactors (SMRs), few were aware of this technology and many said they did not know enough to form an opinion about it. Once provided with some details and benefits, many had more positive views about the potential use of SMRs in Canada. A number of participants were prepared to believe these small reactors might be safer and easier to construct, while requiring fewer resources and producing less waste than traditional reactors. A small number of participants remained hesitant or opposed, reiterating concerns about safety, and questioning whether enough qualified workers would be available to safely operate these facilities.

Informed that some experts had identified the use of SMRs as an effective way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and aid the Government of Canada in achieving its goal of net-zero emissions, participants were generally more receptive. Many also reacted positively when told about the possible economic benefits of SMRs, and the opportunities their increased use in Canada would present to Canadian companies already experienced in developing the technology. Some liked the idea of Canada becoming a global leader in this technology and exporting SMRs to other countries. A few, however, also expressed concern about the safety of operations in other countries and whether this technology could be 'weaponized'. Overall, after being exposed to positive messages about the use of SMRs, participants were fairly receptive to considering their possible adoption in Canada, believing they could offer a mix of environmental and economic benefits, and might be a good component of the Government of Canada's long-term energy strategy, so long as they were safe.

Hydrogen-Based Energy (Major Centres Quebec Prospective Homeowners, Northern Quebec)

Few participants were initially familiar with the term 'clean hydrogen'. Among the few who were, hydrogen was viewed as an efficient and potentially good renewable energy source. To aid in discussion, participants were provided with additional information about hydrogen-based energy and its potential applications. Asked about any concerns or potential downsides associated with hydrogen-based energy, a small number of participants expressed concern about potential flammability and resulting accidents or explosions.

Some were open to the idea of the Government of Canada pursuing hydrogen-based energy as part of the mix for Canada, believing it could provide environmental and economic benefits. A significant number of participants, however, felt more research was likely still needed to determine whether this technology represented a viable way to meet Canadian energy needs going forward.



MORE INFORMATION

The Strategic Counsel

Contract number: 35035-182346/001/CY

Contract award date: December 16, 2021

Contract value: \$2,428,991.50
