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# Continuous Qualitative Data Collection of Canadians' Views – December 2022 & January 2023

## Executive Summary

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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 of Canada, as well as emerging trends.

This report includes findings from 15 online focus groups which were conducted between December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022, and January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 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 provided in the section below.

The research for this cycle of focus groups focused largely on the Government of Canada's priorities and performance on various key issues of interest, such as the economy and healthcare. Groups engaging in these discussions included the general population in British Columbia's Lower Mainland and the Chaudière-Appalaches region in Quebec, union workers in Ontario, frequent healthcare users in Atlantic Canada, adults who had recently changed career paths in mid-sized and major centres in Alberta, senior frequent healthcare users in mid-size and major Prairie centres, adults experiencing financial pressures in Quebec, people of colour in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), parents of children under 12 in the National Capital Region of Quebec, members of the Chinese diaspora residing in the City of Vancouver, and Indigenous firearms owners in the Prairies.

The research also explored economic issues such as the cost of living, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Canadian labour market. A number of groups also discussed the public mood at present as well as participants' perspectives related to healthcare and confidence in public health authorities.

Other topics discussed included the Canada wordmark, income taxes and the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), opioids, issues related to the 2SLGBTQI+ community, firearms, housing, immigration, Canada's energy outlook, the Government of Canada's relationship with China, and community challenges in the Chaudière-Appalaches Region of Quebec

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

## Methodology

### Overview of Groups

Target audience:

- Canadian residents, 18 and older.
- Groups were split primarily by location.
- Some groups focused on specific cohorts of the population including union members, frequent healthcare users, those who have recently changed career paths (aged 40-54), seniors (aged 55 and older) who are frequent healthcare users, those experiencing financial pressures, young adults (aged 18-24, 18-30, and 25-30), members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community, people of colour, parents of children under 12, members of the Chinese diaspora, and Indigenous peoples (skewing to those who own firearms).

### Detailed Approach

- Fifteen focus groups (6 in December 2022, 9 in January 2023) were conducted across various regions in Canada.
- Two groups were conducted with the general population in the Chaudière-Appalaches region of Quebec and the Lower Mainland region of British Columbia.

- The other thirteen groups were conducted with key subgroups including:
  - Union members;
  - Frequent healthcare users;
  - Those who have recently changed career paths, aged 40-54;
  - Seniors (aged 55 and up) who are frequent healthcare users;
  - Those experiencing financial pressures;
  - Young adults, aged 18-24, 18-30, and 25-30;
  - Members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community;
  - People of colour;
  - Parents of children under 12;
  - Members of the Chinese diaspora; and
  - Indigenous peoples, skewing to those who own firearms.
- 4 groups in Quebec were conducted in French. All other groups 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, a total of 104 participants attended. 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
Chaudière-Appalaches Region – Quebec	1	French	December 6	6:00-8:00 pm	General Population	8
Ontario	2	English	December 7	6:00-8:00 pm	Union Members	7
Atlantic Canada	3	English	December 8	5:00-7:00 pm	Heavy Users of Healthcare System	7
Mid-size and Major Centres Alberta	4	English	December 13	8:00-10:00 pm	Recently Changed Career Paths, aged 40-54	6
Mid-size and Major Centres Prairies	5	English	December 14	7:00-9:00 pm	Seniors, aged 55+, Heavy Users of Healthcare System	6
Quebec	6	French	December 15	6:00-8:00 pm	Experiencing Financial Pressures	6
Lower Mainland – British Columbia	7	English	January 5	9:00-11:00 pm	General Population	8

Eastern Canada (Atlantic Region & ON)	8	English	January 10	6:00-8:00 pm	Young Adults, aged 25-30	7
Western Canada (SK, MB, AB, BC)	9	English	January 11	8:00-10:00 pm	Young Adults, aged 18-24	7
Quebec	10	French	January 12	6:00-8:00 pm	Young Adults, aged 18-30	7
City of Toronto & Montréal	11	English	January 17	6:00-8:00 pm	Members of the 2SLGBTQI+ Community	6
Greater Toronto Area (GTA)	12	English	January 18	6:00-8:00 pm	People of Colour	7
National Capital Region – Quebec	13	French	January 19	6:00-8:00 pm	Parents of Children under 12	8
City of Vancouver	14	English	January 24	9:00-11:00 pm	Chinese Diaspora	8
Prairies (SK, MB, AB)	15	English	January 25	8:00-10:00 pm	Indigenous Peoples, Firearms Owners	6
<b>Total number of participants</b>						<b>104</b>

## Key Findings

**Government of Canada in the News (Chaudière-Appalaches Region Quebec, Ontario Union Members, Atlantic Canada Frequent Healthcare Users, Mid-Size and Major Centres Alberta Recently Changed Career Paths, Mid-Size and Major Centres Prairies Seniors Frequent Healthcare Users, Quebec Experiencing Financial Pressures, Lower Mainland British Columbia, Atlantic Canada and Ontario Young Adults, Western Canada Young Adults, Quebec Young Adults, GTA People of Colour, National Capital Region Quebec Parents of Children under 12, City of Vancouver Chinese Diaspora, Prairies Indigenous Peoples and Firearms Owners)**

Participants in fourteen groups were asked what they had seen, read, or heard about the Government of Canada in recent days. A wide range of federal announcements and initiatives were recalled. These included recent affordability measures to assist Canadians struggling with the cost of living, interest rate increases from the Bank of Canada, a pledge from the Government of Canada to increase immigration levels, ongoing efforts by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) to recoup ineligibly received Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) payments, and inquiries by the Public Order Emergency Commission examining the federal government’s invocation of the *Emergencies Act* as a response to the Convoy protests in February 2022.

Several also recalled actions and initiatives related to the Government of Canada on the international stage, including ongoing financial and military support for the Government of Ukraine, an agreement

with the United States and Lockheed Martin to acquire a new fleet of F-35 jets for the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), and the Prime Minister's attendance at the North American Leaders' Summit (NALS).

### **2022 Reflections and 2023 Forecast (Lower Mainland British Columbia, Atlantic Canada and Ontario Young Adults, Western Canada Young Adults, Quebec Young Adults)**

Four groups reflected on the biggest issues from 2022 as well as their expectations regarding the challenges Canadians would face in 2023. Asked to identify what they felt to be the most important issues from the past year, many mentioned the rising cost of living, issues related to housing affordability, the removal of COVID-19 public health requirements, and perceived labour shortages in areas such as healthcare and education. Several also mentioned the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine, including the Government of Canada's provision of military and financial assistance in support of the Ukrainian defence effort.

Sharing their expectations regarding what they felt would be the biggest issues in the year ahead, many expected there to be ongoing challenges related to health worker shortages, housing affordability, and the rising cost of living. A number expected that climate change and the ongoing transition to renewable energy would also remain an important focus for the federal government.

### **Government of Canada Priorities and Performance (Chaudière-Appalaches Region Quebec, Ontario Union Members, Atlantic Canada Frequent Healthcare Users, Mid-Size and Major Centres Alberta Recently Changed Career Paths, Mid-Size and Major Centres Prairies Seniors Frequent Healthcare Users, Quebec Experiencing Financial Pressures, Lower Mainland British Columbia, Toronto and Montreal Members of the 2SLGBTQI+ Community, GTA People of Colour, National Capital Region Quebec Parents of Children under 12, City of Vancouver Chinese Diaspora, Prairies Indigenous Peoples and Firearms Owners)**

Participants in twelve groups engaged in conversations related to key issues currently facing Canadians as well as their perspectives regarding the Government of Canada's management of these priorities. Asked to identify the most important areas in need of further prioritization from the federal government, a wide range of issues were mentioned. This included healthcare, inflation and the cost of living, housing affordability, immigration, climate change and the environment, reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

Asked whether they felt that the Government of Canada was on the right or wrong track when it came to addressing the issues most important to Canadians, most believed it to be headed in the wrong direction. A smaller number were more uncertain or mixed in their opinions, while very few had a positive view of the federal government's current direction. Among those who believed that the Government of Canada was on the wrong track, it was widely felt that recent actions related to health worker shortages, housing affordability, and the rising cost of living had been insufficient towards addressing these issues and that far more needed to be done to assist those struggling financially.

### **Jobs and the Economy (Ontario Union Members)**

Participants in the group comprised of union workers residing in Ontario engaged in an additional discussion related to the Canadian labour market and the Government of Canada's management of economic issues in recent years. All thought that the economy and job creation should be among the top priorities for the federal government and many expressed concerns about perceived labour shortages in sectors such as healthcare and education.

Almost all had a negative opinion regarding the federal government's management of the economy in recent years. Several felt that issues related to the rising cost of living, a lack of affordable housing, and low wages had been growing for many years and that the Government of Canada should have been better prepared to assist Canadians with these challenges. Several felt that recent actions taken by the Bank of Canada to raise interest rates over the past year had been too reactive and believed that this process should have been taken more gradually. Discussing additional ways the Government of Canada could assist Canadians, participants suggested ideas such as tax relief for renters and those with large mortgages, increasing the number of homes, hospitals, and schools being built throughout the country, and providing education grants for workers seeking to retrain and/or acquire skills to thrive in the economy going forward.

### **Healthcare (Atlantic Canada Heavy Users of the Healthcare System, Mid-Size and Major Centres Prairies Seniors Frequent Healthcare Users)**

Two groups discussed a number of issues related to healthcare. All participants identified as heavy users of the healthcare system and believed that this needed to be a major priority for the federal government going forward. While most felt that they had adequate access to healthcare and described these services as typically being of exceptional quality, it was widely believed that this was not the case for all Canadians. The view was expressed that the healthcare system was beginning to become strained and that this had contributed to health worker shortages, long wait times at emergency rooms and walk-in clinics, and months-long waiting lists to seek appointments with specialists.

Asked whether their ability to access healthcare had changed in recent years, several felt that it had gotten somewhat worse. It was thought that increasing demand had led to the system becoming overburdened, leading to occasional delays in accessing service. Almost all expected these issues to persist and believed that the accessibility and quality of healthcare in their area would worsen in coming years. Several were concerned about the potential of increasing numbers of family doctors retiring in the next decade with not enough new physicians being trained to replace them. A large number were of the opinion that in order to address this issue greater investments would need to be made towards recruiting and training more doctors and nurses as well as bringing in a larger number of health workers from outside of Canada.

Discussing the role of the federal government in healthcare, most were of the impression that this was primarily a provincial/territorial responsibility. Asked if they were aware of any recent negotiations between the federal government and the provinces/territories related to healthcare, few were. Provided with information regarding the federal government's position in these negotiations, most felt

its stance to be reasonable and expected that it would be beneficial to pursue goals such as establishing measurable national indicators on priority health areas and improving health data management throughout the country. A number, however, expected that it would be difficult for the Government of Canada to reach an agreement with every province and territory on this front, believing each had its own unique needs and perspectives related to healthcare provision.

### **2SLGBTQI+ Community (Toronto and Montreal Members of the 2SLGBTQI+ Community)**

Participants in the group comprised of members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community were asked a few questions pertaining to their unique perspectives and experiences. Asked to identify the most pressing issues facing 2SLGBTQI+ Canadians, many mentioned mental health. It was thought that members of these communities struggled with mental health issues to a far greater degree relative to other Canadians and that they were often unable to access the resources they needed in times of crisis. A few also believed housing to be a significant issue for these individuals and were of the impression that 2SLGBTQI+ individuals faced a higher level of discrimination from prospective landlords and had less access to safe and affordable housing as a result.

All felt that the Government of Canada had a responsibility to address the issues facing 2SLGBTQI+ communities. Several believed that while the federal government had been positive in its intentions to improve the lives of 2SLGBTQI+ individuals, little in the way of tangible impact had been made thus far. It was felt that much more needed to be done to address the larger systemic issues facing these communities, including perceived challenges related to housing, a lack of employment opportunities, and the fears of many in 2SLGBTQI+ communities for their personal safety.

### **Public Mood (Lower Mainland British Columbia, Ontario and Atlantic Canada Young Adults, Western Canada Young Adults, Quebec Young Adults, Toronto and Montreal Members of the 2SLGBTQI+ Community, GTA People of Colour, National Capital Region Quebec Parents of Children under 12)**

Participants in seven groups engaged in conversations related to the public mood in Canada at present as well as the challenges currently facing the population as a whole. To begin, participants were asked to describe what they felt to be the best things about living in Canada. A wide range of responses were shared, including a high standard of living, diversity and multiculturalism, freedom of expression, a perceived lower crime rate, and the celebration of Indigenous cultures and histories. Asked to identify the areas where they felt Canadians generally agreed with one another, several spoke of the openness of Canadians to diversity and multiculturalism, shared views on the importance of social benefits and supports (such as universal healthcare, maternity leave, and supports for those living with disabilities), and a general respect and politeness towards one another.

Focusing next on what they believed to be the greatest challenges facing Canadians today, participants provided a number of responses. These included inflation and the rising cost of living, the growing impact of climate change, perceived issues related to healthcare, mental health, and addiction, as well as the need for further reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. It was widely thought among participants that with long-term planning and a concerted effort on the part of the federal and



provincial/territorial governments that most of these challenges could be overcome. Discussing how the federal government should go about addressing these challenges, it was thought by several that more attention needed to be devoted towards ensuring that the everyday needs of Canadians such as healthcare, affordable housing, and mental health treatment were being met. Several also felt that more needed to be done to find ways to promote unity among Canadians, with a number believing that a growing divide had emerged in recent years in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **The Economy (Ontario Union Members, Mid-Size and Major Centres Alberta Recently Changed Career Paths, Quebec Experiencing Financial Pressures, GTA People of Colour, National Capital Region Quebec Parents of Children under 12)**

Participants in five groups engaged in conversations related to the economy and the Canadian labour market. Discussions focused on the impact of inflation and the rising cost of living, the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on Canadian workers, and challenges related to changing career paths.

### **Cost of Living (Quebec Experiencing Financial Pressures, GTA People of Colour, National Capital Region Parents of Children under 12)**

Three groups shared their perspectives regarding the cost of living and the most pressing financial challenges facing Canadians at present. Almost all believed that rising inflation had impacted a large number of households over the past year and had particularly affected lower and middle-income Canadians, seniors living on fixed incomes, and post-secondary students. While some expected that the rate of inflation would slow in the next few years, several were concerned that costs would continue to rise in the interim, especially for essentials such as groceries, electricity, and gasoline. Asked what they felt had contributed to rising inflation, many believed it to be a global issue and had at least in part been related to the COVID-19 pandemic and disruptions caused by conflicts such as that between Ukraine and Russia.

Asked whether they felt the Government of Canada understood the financial pressures Canadians were experiencing at present, most felt that it did. Several, however, believed that not enough was being done to address these challenges and most thought that the Government of Canada was on the wrong track when it came to alleviating the financial pressures currently impacting Canadian households. Discussing additional actions that the Government of Canada could take to address these challenges, a number of participants thought that more could be done to provide tax relief for low and middle-income Canadians and to increase taxation on large corporations (such as major grocers) who were believed to have profited immensely during the pandemic.

The group comprised of those residing in Quebec who were currently experiencing financial pressures engaged in a brief exercise where they were presented with information regarding a number of affordability measures recently announced by the Government of Canada and asked which they felt would be most helpful to those currently facing financial challenges. The initiative to index benefits to the rate of inflation received the highest level of support from participants, with many believing that this represented the most effective way to assist Canadian households, especially those on fixed incomes, with the rising cost of living. The introduction of the Canada Dental Benefit (CDB) as well as

increases to the amount that eligible Canadians may receive through the Canada Workers Benefit (CWB) also received a moderate level of support.

### **Pandemic Impact (Ontario Union Members)**

Participants in the group of Ontario union members took part in a discussion regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on workers and industries. To begin, participants were asked to share how their type of work had changed in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Comments focused on a number of sectors, including healthcare, education, and construction. A large number of participants pointed to perceived labour shortages as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic as a growing issue in their sectors. Many in healthcare and education also believed that more workers in their field were burning out or leaving the profession altogether while those in construction had experienced numerous postponed or cancelled projects. In addition to the pandemic, all participants believed that inflation had impacted their sector in some fashion, driving up the cost of supplies in sectors such as construction and education.

None were aware of any recent actions or initiatives from the federal government to better support workers in their sector. Discussing ways the federal government could assist workers in their industry moving forward, participants offered a wide range of suggestions. These included, increasing mental health supports for workers facing anxiety or burnout, improving health and safety standards in sectors such as construction, and incentivizing employers to offer full-time positions that paid workers a living wage.

### **Changing Career Paths (Mid-Size and Major Centres Alberta Recently Changed Career Paths)**

Participants residing in Alberta who had recently changed careers engaged in a discussion related to the current labour market and their experiences in switching career paths. Asked to describe the quality and availability of jobs in their region, several were of the impression that wages had stagnated or decreased in recent years while the cost of living had risen substantially. Almost all had observed worker shortages in their respective areas, particularly concerning tradespeople, teachers, and heavy equipment operators. Focusing on how these issues might progress going forward, many were worried about the potential of a greater portion of Canada's aging population retiring in the next decade, further exacerbating worker shortages.

Asked why they had decided to change career paths, many stated that they had been dissatisfied with their previous jobs and had wanted to pursue a career that made them feel happy and fulfilled. Other motivating factors mentioned by participants included the ability to better support their families, increasing their earning potential, and learning new skills to become more valuable in the current job market. Several mentioned facing challenges related to changing their career paths. These included the difficulty of learning new skills, long periods of study required to obtain necessary certifications, and anxiety about foregoing a stable income by pursuing further education. Financial insecurity was identified by many as their biggest concern when changing career paths.

Asked how best the federal government could support workers interested in changing careers, many expressed that the eligibility criteria for existing federal programs and supports was too restrictive. It

was suggested that the Government of Canada should loosen these requirements in order to allow more individuals to qualify. Others felt that more could be done to inform Canadians about the many resources that were available to them, believing a large number were currently unaware of these programs.

### **Income Taxes and the Canada Revenue Agency (Atlantic Canada and Ontario Young Adults, Western Canada Young Adults, Quebec Young Adults)**

Three groups, all comprised of young adults, took part in discussions related to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and the filing of their annual income taxes. On balance, a smaller number reported filing their income taxes online compared to those who used other methods such as a personal accountant, tax preparation firms such as H&R Block, or having them prepared by a friend or family member. For those who typically filed their taxes online, most cited the convenience and relatively low cost of services such as TurboTax as their primary reasons for doing so. Asked to share their primary reasons for filing their income taxes, several believed it was their legal responsibility to do so and did not wish to incur any financial penalties for not filing their taxes on time. A smaller number mentioned the potential of receiving an income tax rebate as an additional incentive for filing their taxes.

Asked to identify any barriers or challenges that they may face when filing their income taxes, a large number expressed a general lack of knowledge regarding how to prepare their taxes. It was expressed that this process could often feel overwhelming and was the source of considerable anxiety for some. Focusing on ways that the CRA could make filing income taxes easier, many believed that greater resources could be placed into educating and assisting Canadians (and especially younger individuals) in preparing their taxes. Additional actions suggested included simplifying federal tax forms to make them easier to complete, as well as developing an online chat function where those with questions could quickly reach out to CRA representatives for assistance.

### **Healthcare (Atlantic Canada Frequent Healthcare Users, Mid-Size and Major Centres Prairies Seniors Frequent Healthcare Users, Atlantic Canada and Ontario Young Adults, Western Canada Young Adults, Quebec Young Adults, GTA People of Colour, National Capital Region Quebec Parents of Children under 12)**

Participants in seven groups engaged in conversations related to healthcare. These discussions focused on participants' perspectives regarding healthcare in their communities, healthcare priority areas for the federal government, and trust in public health authorities.

### **Healthcare Perspectives (GTA People of Colour, National Capital Region Quebec Parents of Children under 12)**

Two groups shared their views regarding the healthcare system at present and the challenges currently facing their respective communities. All viewed healthcare as a major priority and one in need of further attention from the federal government. Most identified accessibility to healthcare as a major issue in their areas, citing challenges related to long wait-times at emergency rooms and walk-in

clinics, months-long waiting lists for appointments with specialists, and difficulties in accessing preventative tests and procedures (such as blood tests) in a timely manner. Several also mentioned perceived worker shortages as a significant challenge in their area. It was believed that there were not enough healthcare professionals at present and that this had led to increasing rates of burnout among the doctors and nurses forced to take on higher workloads as a result.

Almost all felt that the Government of Canada was currently on the wrong track when it came to healthcare. Several believed that while this issue had been discussed a great deal at the federal level over the past few years, this had not led to any measurable improvements related to healthcare provision in their communities. A number expressed the need for further investments towards improving healthcare infrastructure as well as increasing the number of doctors and nurses practicing in Canada.

### **Healthcare Priority Areas (Atlantic Canada Frequent Healthcare Users, Mid-Size and Major Centres Prairies Seniors Frequent Healthcare Users, GTA People of Colour)**

Three groups engaged in discussions related to healthcare priority areas recently announced by the Government of Canada. Participants were informed that the Government of Canada had recently announced five priority areas related to healthcare. These included addressing health worker shortages and reducing wait times, increasing access to family health services, improving long-term and home care, addressing mental health and substance use, and modernizing health data management and virtual care.

Reactions to this list were largely positive among participants, with many believing it represented a strong plan to address the issues currently facing the healthcare system. Several identified the priority of addressing healthcare worker shortages and reducing wait times as being especially important, with many believing this to be the top issue facing healthcare in their region at present. Participants also spoke positively regarding the goals of expanding resources for mental healthcare, increasing access to family health services, and greater use of virtual care. Though believing it to be important in the long-term, a small number questioned whether modernizing health data management should be a top priority, believing this to be a less pressing concern compared to the other issues. Asked if learning about these priorities impacted how they felt about the federal government, most were encouraged by the comprehensiveness of the list. A number, however, expressed that while the identification of these priorities represented a step in the right direction, their evaluation of the federal government would likely depend on how successful it was in addressing these areas in the years to come.

### **Confidence in Public Health Authorities (Atlantic Canada and Ontario Young Adults, Western Canada Young Adults, Quebec Young Adults)**

Participants in three groups, all comprised of young adults, engaged in discussions related to their confidence in public health authorities, officials, and health-related information emanating from the federal government. To begin, participants were asked how they would typically determine whether information they encounter online is trustworthy. Most indicated that they would generally confirm any health-related information they found on social media by consulting official sources such as websites run by the federal or provincial government, public health authorities, and academic experts.

A large number of participants indicated that they would be more inclined to trust those authorities and organizations with long-standing reputations regarding the quality of their research and a demonstrated lack of bias in how they present information. A number expressed skepticism regarding other sources such as those in the media, believing that these outlets often presented information in the most attention-grabbing manner possible and were less focused on providing accurate, unbiased medical guidance.

Focusing on health-related information from specific individuals, most identified factors such as academic and professional credentials, research background, and personal reputation as things they would consider when determining whether they were trustworthy. Discussing whether individual spokespersons tended to impact their perceptions of health-related organizations, most believed this was highly dependent on the individual and the organization in question and something they would determine on a case-by-case basis. Asked to identify the qualities they would hope to see in public health officials, most indicated that they would expect public health experts to have a strong educational background, first-hand experience working in healthcare (including directly with patients), and would consider all Canadians, including marginalized populations, in their decision-making. Values such as transparency, compassion, and relatability were also identified as important qualities for public health experts to possess.

Only a small number of participants expressed familiarity with individual public health officers at the federal and provincial/territorial level. Asked if they would generally trust these individuals, most believed that they would. Several were of the impression that these officials were typically experts in their fields, had acquired decades of medical experience, and presented advice and guidance based in science and verifiable facts. Asked what more could be done to increase the level of trust among younger Canadians regarding public health information, several reiterated the need for greater consistency, increased transparency, and a more open dialogue as to how and why public decisions are made.

### **Canada Wordmark (Chaudière-Appalaches Region Quebec, Ontario Union Members)**

Two groups engaged in discussions regarding how they would typically recognize information and messages emanating from the federal government across various channels, including television, social media, print, and radio. Asked how they would typically recognize this type of information many described a logo or official letterhead that typically accompanied federal correspondence. A number also commented that this type of information usually explicitly stated that it was from the federal government, making it easier to recognize. Describing how they would determine whether information they hear on mediums such as radio was from the federal government, several recalled a jingle that typically accompanied federal messaging as well as a distinct female voice stating that it had been a message from the Government of Canada.

Shown an image of the Canada wordmark, all participants recognized this symbol, with a number identifying it as the logo they had been describing earlier. Many recalled having seen the wordmark on federal buildings, correspondence, and advertisements in print and on television. Asked to describe what the wordmark symbolized, most believed that its primary function was to designate information

and correspondence as being official from the Government of Canada. It was commented that the consistent use of the wordmark over many years had been effective in providing Canadians with an easily recognizable symbol to represent the federal government. Most expected to see this symbol on all federal correspondence and buildings, with some specifically associating it with annual tasks such as the preparation of their personal income taxes.

Presented with the Government of Canada's official musical signature all expressed familiarity with the jingle, with several recalling hearing it on the radio, television, and on content posted on social media. Asked why they felt that the Government of Canada used this musical signature, most believed it served as a memorable and easily recognizable audible cue that the information it accompanied was from the Government of Canada and was important to pay attention to.

### **2SLGBTQI+ Issues (Toronto and Montreal Members of the 2SLGBTQI+ Community)**

One group, comprised of participants identifying as members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community, discussed a number of issues faced by 2SLGBTQI+ individuals as well as recent actions taken by the Government of Canada to address these challenges. Asked to describe the historic relationship between 2SLGBTQI+ communities and the Government of Canada, participants shared a range of perspectives. While a number felt that Canada had historically shown leadership on 2SLGBTQI+ issues, a few were more pessimistic, believing that these communities had historically been neglected by the federal government. This was thought to especially be the case for transgender, non-binary, and two-spirited (2S) individuals, who it was felt had been excluded from most federal initiatives and policymaking until very recently.

None agreed with the statement that the Government of Canada listens, cares, and responds to the needs of folks within the 2SLGBTQI+ community. On balance, most felt that little in the way of tangible progress had been made by the Government of Canada on the issues most important to 2SLGBTQI+ individuals. Asked whether they believed that this situation had improved in Canada in recent years, an equal number of participants felt that things were better now as those who felt their daily lives had remained mostly unchanged. No participants thought that the situation had worsened. Discussing ways that the Government of Canada could further assist these communities, several believed that a greater emphasis needed to be placed on education-focused initiatives. It was believed that many of the misconceptions regarding 2SLGBTQI+ individuals were the result of a lack of understanding and education about them. It was felt this would be especially beneficial both for younger Canadians as well as the parents of 2SLGBTQI+ youth who may not fully understand the challenges their children are facing.

No participants were aware of any recent actions from the Government of Canada related to 2SLGBTQI+ Canadians. To aid in discussion, the group was presented with a number of recent federal actions and initiatives related to 2SLGBTQI+ which it had developed in consultation with members of these communities. Sharing their reactions, the initiative to support Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ resilience and resurgence received the broadest level of support among participants. The initiatives to strengthen 2SLGBTQI+ data and evidence-based policy making and to prioritize and sustain 2SLGBTQI+ community action also received a significant level of attention, while a smaller number

expressed support for the initiatives to engage all Canadians in fostering a more inclusive future and embed 2SLGBTQI+ issues in the work of the Government of Canada. All participants felt that these priorities, if achieved, would go a long way towards improving the lives of 2SLGBTQI+ Canadians and hoped to see immediate action on these fronts.

### **Firearms (Prairies Indigenous Peoples and Firearms Owners)**

Participants in this group, comprised of Indigenous firearms owners residing in the Prairies, discussed recent measures announced by the federal government to strengthen gun laws in Canada. A large number identified gun crime as a serious problem and were of the impression that it had risen in recent years, especially among younger Canadians. Asked whether they felt firearms regulations in Canada were too loose, too strict, or at about the right level, a roughly equal number said existing laws were sufficient as those who believed they should be tightened.

While generally supportive of strong gun regulations, a number expressed concerns that their own firearms (such as hunting rifles), might be subject to recently announced prohibitions by the Government of Canada. A few feared that without these firearms they would be limited in their ability to provide food for their families and communities. A number thought that recently proposed firearms regulations had lacked a proper consultation process with Indigenous communities and that these laws were being imposed onto them without their consent.

Provided information regarding a number of recently proposed measures from the federal government related to firearms, participant reactions were varied. Several spoke positively regarding increased regulations for those involved in acts of domestic violence, criminal harassment, and stalking. Similarly, a large number expressed support for the proposal to address intimate partner violence, gender-based violence, and self-harm involving firearms. Participants were also largely in favour of the initiative to increase resources to fight gun smuggling and trafficking, believing this had been a key driver of crimes involving firearms. The proposed national freeze on the buying and selling of handguns was met with mixed reactions. While some felt the goal of reducing the number of handguns in Canada to be important in increasing the safety of Canadians, a number believed that licenced, law-abiding firearm owners should continue to be allowed to possess handguns. A number reacted negatively to the initiative to limit long gun magazines to be able to carry no more than five rounds. It was felt that this measure was particularly restrictive to hunters as many hunting rifles would need to be modified or replaced in order to adhere to these restrictions.

### **Housing (Lower Mainland British Columbia)**

One group, based in the Lower Mainland region of British Columbia (B.C.), discussed a number of housing initiatives recently announced by the Government of Canada. Asked whether they were aware of any recent actions from the federal government related to housing, while several were of the impression that steps had been taken to temporarily prohibit non-Canadians from purchasing residential housing, no other initiatives could be recalled.



Shown a number of housing initiatives recently announced by the Government of Canada, participants were asked to select which they felt would have the most positive impact on the housing market in Canada. Among these initiatives, the introduction of new taxation rules to deter house flipping and the two-year ban on all non-Canadians from buying residential properties in Canada received the highest level of support among participants. The initiatives to end blind bidding, create taxation penalties to prevent landlords from 'renovicing' tenants, and making assignment sales of new and renovated housing taxable also received a moderate level of support. Asked if any of these initiatives would personally benefit them, a number of participants expected that they would, with some specifically mentioning the positive impact they expected a ban on non-Canadian buyers would have on making housing more affordable in cities such as Vancouver.

Discussing additional actions that the Government of Canada could take related to housing, participants suggested a number of actions. These included greater regulation of developers and realtors, further assistance for first-time home buyers, and financial supports for renters, who were also seen as struggling under the current housing market.

### **Immigration (Chaudière-Appalaches Region Quebec)**

Participants in the Chaudière-Appalaches region of Quebec discussed a number of topics related to immigration. Asked to describe the current state of the immigration system in Canada, almost all were of the impression that the process had become overly complicated and time-consuming. Discussing the potential benefits of welcoming new immigrants, many focused on the economic advantages this could bring, including bolstering the workforce and increasing productivity across a number of sectors. A number also felt that immigration was beneficial through its ability to increase the diversity of cultural backgrounds and perspectives among Canadians, fostering a stronger and more inclusive population as a result. Sharing their potential concerns related to immigration, a number were worried that there would not be enough affordable housing options for new arrivals and that higher immigration may serve to exacerbate the perceived housing crisis at present.

A slightly larger number believed that the Government of Canada was currently headed in the right direction regarding immigration than those who felt otherwise. For those who felt the federal government was on the right track, it was believed that there were many supports in place for new immigrants to Canada and that the federal government had been successful in increasing immigration levels in recent years. Among participants who believed that immigration was headed in the wrong direction, it was thought that there were not nearly enough resources in place to accommodate the current level of immigration to Canada and that significant investments would need to be made into this area.

Informed that the Government of Canada was seeking to increase immigration rates with the goal of welcoming 500,000 new immigrants in 2025, most reacted positively. It was believed that this represented a reasonable goal on the part of the federal government and would be beneficial to Canada in the long run.



### **Opioids (Lower Mainland British Columbia, City of Vancouver Chinese Diaspora)**

Participants in two groups based in British Columbia engaged in conversations concerning opioid addiction in the province. Almost all believed that addiction and illicit substance use was a major issue at present and were concerned that it would continue to increase in prevalence unless substantial action was taken.

Asked whether they were familiar with the terms 'safer supply' and 'supervised consumption sites' most indicated that they were and expressed support for these programs. While a few thought that these approaches may enable further drug addiction, several believed they would be immensely beneficial in preventing overdoses and taking pressure off of emergency medical services (EMS) and hospitals. Several thought that preventing substance use and addiction needed to be a responsibility for both the federal and provincial governments, and that each had a role to play in addressing this issue.

The group based in the City of Vancouver were asked a few additional questions regarding the recent exemption to the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* granted by the Government of Canada to remove criminal penalties for possession of up to 2.5 grams of certain illegal substances in British Columbia. Several felt positively about this initiative, believing it would be helpful towards freeing up additional resources for the criminal justice system and that there was little to be gained by repeatedly arresting individuals for small amounts of drugs. A number, however, were concerned that this could lead to further levels of addiction and substance use now that these criminal penalties had been removed. It was expressed that in order for this initiative to be successful, it would have to be combined with increased resources for mental health and addictions treatment and with the eventual goal of getting these individuals to stop using illicit substances altogether.

### **Energy Outlook (Mid-Size and Major Centres Alberta Recently Changed Career Paths)**

Participants residing in Alberta took part in a discussion regarding their outlook for the future of the province's energy sector. All participants viewed the oil and gas sector as being critical to the overall health of the Albertan economy. Asked to describe the current state of Alberta's oil and gas sector, many believed that it had been performing poorly in recent years. Several stated that many communities which had previously relied on oil and gas production for their economic survival had been abandoned as a result of reduced activity in this sector. Concerns were also expressed about the perceived prevalence of foreign-owned oil and gas companies operating in Canada, believing these had been supplanting their domestic competitors.

All felt that it was of critical importance for Alberta to diversify its economy and become less reliant on oil and gas. Suggestions for potential areas of economic diversification included technology, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, and agriculture. Asked whether the renewable energy sector might be an important area of future economic activity in Alberta, a number expressed skepticism. Many believed that clean energy sources were not capable of producing enough energy to meet the province's energy needs and that a large-scale transition to renewable energy was not realistic at this juncture. Discussing the future of Alberta's clean energy sector, participants were largely pessimistic

in their expectations. Many did not believe that the province would experience much economic growth over the next decade. Several also expressed concerns that a large-scale transition away from oil and gas would lead to a significant increase in the price of energy. Focusing on the changes that would likely be required in order to facilitate a transition to clean energy, a number expected that there would need to be a considerable amount of new infrastructure built to support these new energy systems.

### **Relationship With China (City of Vancouver Chinese Diaspora)**

One group, comprised of Chinese Canadians residing in the City of Vancouver, discussed the Government of Canada's current relationship with China. All believed that this relationship had deteriorated in recent decades and even more so in recent years. It was thought by many that this had at least in part been due to China's rise as a larger economic and geopolitical power and its perceived ability to be more assertive in its foreign policy as a result. A few believed that this issue had been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, where strict public health requirements in China had led to an interruption in trade activity between the two countries.

Discussing whether the Government of Canada was headed in the right direction in terms of its relationship with China, participants expressed a great deal of uncertainty. Several described what they viewed as a lack of direction on the Government of Canada's part related to China and felt that its actions had been mostly reactive regarding this relationship in recent years. Asked what the Government of Canada had done well regarding its relationship with China, a number spoke positively of its commitment to human rights and Canadian values, including outspoken criticism of China regarding human rights abuses within its borders.

Asked how they hoped this relationship would evolve in the years to come, several expressed the need for a clearer, long-term strategy from the federal government outlining its intentions and expectations regarding China going forward. While also believing it prudent to maintain an ongoing trade relationship with China, many hoped to see a greater emphasis from the Government of Canada towards diversifying its trading relationships with other Asian countries and ensuring it had multiple trading partners in the region.

### **Community Challenges (Chaudière-Appalaches Region Quebec)**

Participants in the group from the Chaudière-Appalaches region of Quebec engaged in a brief discussion related to the various challenges faced by their community. Asked to identify areas in need of greater focus from the federal government participants identified a wide range of issues. These included the province's aging population, a perceived lack of access to affordable housing, ongoing shortages of skilled workers, and limited access to healthcare (and primary care in particular)

Discussing the most important sectors and industries in their community, several mentioned the local petroleum refinery. Manufacturing was also viewed as an essential sector, with several identifying metal production and furniture manufacturing as important industries within the region. Focusing on

the future, several felt that sectors such as agriculture and food production needed to be prioritized to a far greater extent by the Government of Canada going forward. It was thought that by increasing localized food production, residents of the region would be able to obtain lower food prices while also ensuring a more secure supply of food in the long-term.

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**MORE INFORMATION**

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