



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada

Continuous Qualitative Data Collection of Canadians' Views – April 2023

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 12 online focus groups which were conducted between April 4th, 2023, and April 27th, 2023, in multiple locations across the country including Alberta, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Atlantic Canada, Quebec, and British Columbia (B.C.). Details concerning the locations, recruitment, and composition of the groups are provided in the section below.

The research for this cycle focused largely on the Government of Canada's priorities and performance on a range of issues important to Canadians. Related to this, some groups took part in targeted discussions focusing on federal activities related to public transportation, official languages, Canada's economic outlook, and issues related to seniors. All participants discussed what they had seen, read, or heard about the Government of Canada in recent days, with a number of groups engaging in extended conversations related to their news consumption habits, initiatives announced as part of the 2023 federal budget, and the Québec Bridge.

This research cycle also explored the issue of online safety, which was discussed by those in major centres in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, mid-size and major centres in Quebec, small and mid-size centres in Atlantic Canada, and by frequent media consumers in Quebec. Other issues related to technology, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and cryptocurrency were explored by those in the group comprised of financial sector workers residing in Ontario. Participants in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, the Greater Toronto Area (G.T.A.), Atlantic Canada, and Quebec City focused on a number of matters related to community safety and bail reform, while those based in Alberta and Northern Ontario took part in extended discussions concerning the 2023 federal budget.

Other topics discussed this cycle included issues related to the federal government's carbon pricing system, climate change and the environment, federal government services, the present cost of living, concept testing for the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), the protection and promotion of the French language, and local issues in Northern B.C.

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 recent and frequent users of Government of Canada services; middle class participants aged 30-45 with children from single and two-parent households, frequent media consumers, regular users of public transit, financial sector workers, and working seniors aged 55 and over.

Detailed Approach

- Twelve groups across various regions in Canada.

- Six groups were conducted among the general population residing in major centres in Alberta, Northern Ontario, major centres in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, Northern British Columbia, mid-size and major centres in Quebec, and small and mid-size centres in Atlantic Canada.
- The other six groups were conducted with key subgroups including:
 - Recent and frequent users of Government of Canada services;
 - Middle Class, aged 30-45 with children, combination of single and two-parent households;
 - Frequent media consumers;
 - Frequent users of public transit;
 - Financial sector workers;
 - Working seniors aged 55 and over;
- The three 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, 85 participants attended, in total. Details on attendance numbers by group can be found below.
- Each participant received an honorarium. The incentive was \$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
Major City Centres Alberta	1	English	April 4	8:00-10:00 pm	General Population	7
Northern Ontario	2	English	April 5	6:00-8:00 pm	General Population	7
Major City Centres Prairies (AB, SK, MB)	3	English	April 11	8:00-10:00 pm	Recent and Frequent users of Government of Canada services	8
Nova Scotia	4	English	April 12	5:00-7:00 pm	Middle Class, aged 30-45 with children, combination single and two-parent household	6
Major City Centres Quebec	5	French	April 13	6:00-8:00 pm	Frequent media consumers	7
Major City Centres Prairies (SK,MB)	6	English	April 17	8:00-10:00 pm	General Population	7
Greater Toronto Area	7	English	April 18	6:00-8:00 pm	Frequent Users of Public Transit	7
Northern British Columbia	8	English	April 19	9:00-11:00 pm	General Population	8

Mid-sized and Major Centres Quebec	9	French	April 20	6:00-8:00 pm	General Population	7
Major City Centres Ontario	10	English	April 25	6:00-8:00 pm	Financial sector workers	8
Small to Mid-sized Centres Atlantic Canada	11	English	April 26	5:00-7:00 pm	General Population	7
Quebec City	12	French	April 27	6:00-8:00 pm	Working seniors aged over 55	6
Total number of participants						85

Key Findings

Government of Canada in the News (All Locations)

At the beginning of each group participants were asked what they had seen, read, or heard about the Government of Canada in recent days. A wide range of actions and initiatives were recalled, including the tabling of the 2023 federal budget, public service labour disruptions related to strike action by the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), the decision by the Government of Canada to raise the federal minimum wage as of April 1st, 2023, an announcement by the Bank of Canada that it would be maintaining interest rates at 4.5%, the resumption of the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) of debt recovery activities for those with outstanding balances on their accounts, and ongoing investigations into alleged interference by China in recent Canadian federal elections.

Participants also recalled actions and initiatives related to the Government of Canada on the international stage. These included ongoing financial and military assistance for Ukraine, the temporary suspension of Canadian diplomatic operations in Sudan due to escalating violence and civil unrest in the country, and the participation of the Prime Minister in the Global Citizen NOW summit focusing on finding long-term strategies to address pressing issues such as climate change, food insecurity, and gender inequality throughout the world.

News Consumption (Major Centres Quebec Frequent Media Consumers, Mid-Size and Major Centres Quebec)

Two groups based in Quebec engaged in a brief conversation related to their news consumption habits. Asked which sources they would typically use to receive news, participants in both groups cited televised sources such as TVA, written outlets including La Presse and Le Journal de Montreal, and radio outlets such as Radio Canada. A number also reported utilizing social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, as well as receiving information via word of mouth from friends, family, and colleagues. Discussing how they would typically go about determining whether the news they were reading was trustworthy, many indicated that they would seek to determine whether the information could be verified elsewhere, as well as ensure that there was not any potential bias on the

part of the journalist or news organization. Questioned where they would look to find news and information specifically related to the Government of Canada, most cited official sources such as federally operated websites, verified accounts on platforms such as LinkedIn, and trusted outlets such as Radio Canada and La Presse.

Budget 2023 Initiatives (Major Centres Saskatchewan and Manitoba)

One group engaged in a longer conversation related to initiatives announced as part of the 2023 federal budget. While none could initially recall any actions or initiatives included in the budget, when prompted several reported having heard about the announcement of a one-time Grocery Rebate to assist lower-income Canadians currently struggling with the cost of living. While expecting that this would likely be helpful for some households in the short-term, it was widely thought that this measure would not have much of a long-term impact towards assisting Canadians with the cost living. Asked whether they had heard about the announcement of expanded eligibility for the new Canada Dental Benefit (CDB), a number indicated that they had. Almost all felt that this was an important initiative, even if they would not personally benefit from it.

Quebec Bridge (Québec City Working Seniors)

One group took part in a brief discussion regarding the Quebec Bridge. Asked whether they had seen, read, or heard anything related to the bridge, while a few were of the impression that it was in need of maintenance and repainting, none could recall any specific details. Asked who they believed was responsible for the Québec Bridge, several were of the impression that it was owned and operated by the Canadian National Railway Company (CN) and that CN was primarily responsible for the continued maintenance of the bridge. All felt that the bridge was important to Quebec, and believed that it remained critical for facilitating road, rail, and pedestrian transportation within the province. Asked whether the federal government should consider acquiring the bridge from CN, almost all responded positively to this idea, viewing the bridge as vital to Quebec's infrastructure and economy.

Government of Canada Priorities and Performance (All Locations)

All groups engaged in discussions related to numerous issues currently facing Canadians as well as their perspectives regarding the federal government's performance in managing these priorities. Asked to identify areas where they felt that the federal government had performed well as of late, participants provided a range of responses. These included the affordability and perceived high quality of Canadian health care services, the provision of benefits and supports such as the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) and Employment Insurance (EI), federal actions to address priorities such as climate change, the prioritization of diversity and inclusiveness in Canadian society, increasing immigration rates, international assistance to countries such as Ukraine, and actions towards further reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

Participants also identified a range of areas in which they felt that the Government of Canada had room for improvement. These included health care accessibility and long wait times for emergency services, inflation and the high cost of living, perceived shortages of teachers and other types of

educators at the primary and secondary level, the growing national deficit, and perceived backlogs in processing important documents such as immigration and passport applications.

Asked to identify the areas which they felt were most in need of prioritization by the Government of Canada going forward, a large number reiterated concerns about inflation and the rising cost of living. It was thought that further action needed to be taken by the federal government to make life more affordable for Canadians in areas such as groceries, fuel, housing, cellular rates, and other essential areas. Many also mentioned the need to focus on improving the health care system, including reducing wait times, making it easier for non-Canadian doctors and nurses to practice in Canada, and investing further into areas such as mental health. Other areas identified by participants included infrastructure improvements for roads and highways, the need to expand public transit systems, increased resources for areas such as education and law enforcement, and addressing ongoing issues related to climate change and reconciliation.

Public Transportation (G.T.A. Public Transit Users)

Participants residing in the Greater Toronto Area (G.T.A.) took part in a brief discussion related to public transit. All reported that they utilized public transit on a regular basis. Asked which level of government they believed was responsible for public transit, most were of the impression that this was primarily a provincial responsibility. Discussing the role of the Government of Canada on this front, a number were of the impression that federal funding was frequently provided towards building new public transit infrastructure, as well as improving and maintaining existing systems. Asked which objectives were most important for the federal government to focus on related to public transit, a large number believed there needed to be a greater focus on increasing the accessibility of these services. Additionally, it was felt that public transit needed to be made more affordable and that increased discounts should be provided to lower income Canadians who relied upon public transit throughout their daily activities. A number also felt that there needed to be an increased focus on safety on public transit, believing there to have been a considerable increase in instances of harassment and/or violent crime on trains and buses in recent years.

Asked how important they felt it was for the federal government to make investments towards electrifying public transit, participants were mixed in their reactions. While some felt it was important to reduce emissions wherever possible, a roughly equal number were of the view that this would only have a minimal impact on the fight against climate change. A small number expressed the opinion that rather than focus on electrifying ground transportation such as buses, greater investments should be made towards expanding the capacity and reach of subway lines, believing these systems to be more energy efficient in the long run.

Official Languages (Mid-Size and Major Centres Quebec)

One group, comprised of participants residing in Quebec, engaged in a conversation related to Canada's official languages and the protection and promotion of the French language throughout Canada. Most felt this to be an important priority for the Government of Canada to focus on, believing that outside of Quebec there were far fewer French language supports and resources compared to those available to English-speaking Canadians. Asked whether they felt the Government of Canada

was headed in the right direction on this issue (both within Quebec as well as throughout the rest of the country), a roughly equal number believed it was compared to those who were more uncertain or felt they did not know enough information to have an opinion. Very few thought that the federal government was headed in the wrong direction. Discussing further actions that the federal government could take to support the French language in Canada, several believed that greater resources should be invested towards the training of French-speaking educators outside of Quebec as well as increased accessibility to French-language services in all Canadian communities.

Presented with a number of priorities related to official languages and asked to select those which they felt would be most impactful, the goals of increasing funding for schools for Francophone communities outside of Quebec and making investments towards improving access to French immersion and French second-language programs across the country were viewed as the most important for the Government of Canada to focus on. Several also felt that it was critical for the Government of Canada to focus on guaranteeing the equality of the English and French languages in Canada as well as ensuring that every Canadian, when before a court, could be heard and understood by a judge in the official language of their choice.

Economic Outlook (Major Centres Ontario Financial Sector Workers)

Participants in the group comprised of financial sector workers residing in Ontario were asked a few additional questions regarding their outlook and expectations related to the Canadian economy. Most believed the economy to be experiencing significant challenges at present and felt that it had become increasingly volatile and at risk of entering into a recession in the near future. Sharing their outlook for the Canadian economy over the next twelve months, several expected that a large number of households would continue to face financial pressures and that more businesses may begin pursuing cost-cutting measures such as layoffs in the months to come.

Asked whether they felt that the federal government's initiative to provide universal \$10 per day (on average) child care was important towards driving economic growth, participants were mixed in their views. A number expected that this would be economically beneficial, believing that it would allow a greater number of parents (and especially mothers) to return to the workforce as well as making it easier for Canadian families to raise young children. Others, however, expected that this initiative would only have a moderate impact on the overall economy, believing that it primarily benefitted those with young children rather than the broader population. Questioned whether they thought that investments into clean energy and technologies would have a positive impact on the Canadian economy, most expected that any impact would be minimal. The view was expressed that any economic growth in this sector would likely be offset by the perceived significant upfront costs of pursuing these investments.

Seniors (Quebec City Working Seniors)

One group took part in an additional discussion related to issues facing Canadian seniors. All participants were 55 years of age or older and were currently working. Asked to identify the most important issues currently facing seniors, participants mentioned a wide range of areas. Many raised concerns related to benefits for seniors such as such as Old Age Security (OAS) and the Canada

Pension Plan (CPP). A number felt that the amounts offered via these supports needed to be increased substantially to address the rising cost of living. Several also identified issues related to housing and the ability of Canadian seniors to access safe and affordable housing. It was felt that more needed to be done to increase the affordability of housing for seniors as well as to ensure that these individuals had access to in-home supports such as personal support workers (PSWs).

All thought that the Government of Canada was currently headed in the wrong direction when it came to addressing the cost of living for seniors. Related to the cost of housing specifically, it was believed that the federal government needed to take increased action towards developing housing subsidies and affordable housing options specifically targeted towards seniors, especially for those living on fixed incomes. All reported that the high cost of living at present had impacted their retirement plans. A number were concerned that they would have to return to work at some point after retiring while others expected that they would have to delay their retirement plans by at least a few years due to the need for increased savings.

Budget 2023 (Major Centres Alberta, Northern Ontario)

Two groups engaged in conversations related to the 2023 federal budget, which was tabled on March 28th, 2023. Only a small number reported being aware of the budget's tabling, and very few indicated that they had watched its announcement live. Asked to describe the theme and/or focus of the budget, participants identified areas such as health care, clean energy, reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, and the expansion of the Canada Dental Benefit (CDB). Informed that the priorities of Budget 2023 were to help make life more affordable for Canadians, to improve Canada's publicly funded health care systems, and to grow the clean economy, almost all reacted positively. It was widely felt that these areas represented the most pressing concerns for Canadians and required a high level of attention from the federal government. Asked whether they thought the Government of Canada was on the right track when it came to addressing these priorities, participants were largely mixed in their responses. It was felt by many that while the federal government had been making increased efforts to address these issues as of late, there had been little in the way of tangible progress on any of these fronts.

Participants next took part in an exercise where they were presented with a list of measures that were announced as part of the budget and asked to select which they felt would be the most impactful. The initiatives shown to those in the group based in Alberta focused on the priority of making life more affordable for Canadians. Among the measures shown to participants, the initiatives to crack down on junk fees and limit predatory lending practices received the highest level of support. The initiative to increase the federal portion of student grants by 40% also received a high level of approval, with a number commenting that this would likely make pursuing post-secondary education more affordable and increase the economic opportunities available to Canadians as a result. The provision of a one-time Grocery Rebate for lower income households was only met with limited support, with some of the opinion that it would do little to address long-term affordability issues. Only a small number selected the launching of the new Tax-Free First Home Savings Account (FHSA) and the implementation of a right to repair.

Those residing in Northern Ontario were presented with a list of measures related to the priority of making improvements to Canada's publicly funded health care systems. Participants reacted most positively to the Government of Canada's initiative to move forward with new funding agreements with the provinces/territories to address shortages of doctors and nurses and to shorten wait times for emergency services and diagnostic tests. Several also spoke of the importance of the measure to address the opioid crisis through the funding of treatment programs as well as an increased number of harm-reduction initiatives. Safeguarding access to abortion and other sexual and reproductive services as well as expanding eligibility to the CDB were also viewed as important actions by several participants. Only a small number selected the initiatives to modernize the health care system through better data collection and expand eligibility for loan forgiveness for doctors and nurses who choose to work in rural or remote communities.

Both groups were also presented with information regarding a pair of priorities related to the objective of growing the clean economy. These included the creation of a new tax credit to support the manufacturing of clean technologies as well as the creation of a credit to encourage investments that build out Canada's clean electricity across the country. Focusing first on the creation of a new tax credit to support the manufacturing of clean technologies, several were uncertain as to whether this would have an overall positive impact. While some were hopeful that this would lead to the creation of high paying jobs and increased activity in the mining sector, a number felt differently. Several expressed uncertainty regarding this initiative due to the perceived negative impact that the mining of these critical minerals could have on the environment. Describing what they expected would happen if the federal government did not prioritize investments into clean technology, it was widely felt that Canada would fall behind economically and environmentally relative to its peers.

Discussing the tax credit to build up Canada's clean energy grid, while several felt that this initiative would lead to job creation and economic growth in this sector, a number were uncertain as to whether it would be environmentally beneficial as well. A few expressed the view that the large amount of electricity generation required for a large portion of Canadians to use technology such as EVs would likely come with its own negative environmental impacts and believed this action would not reduce emissions to a considerable degree. Asked why they felt the Government of Canada was prioritizing this action, many were of the impression that this was where the global economy was headed and that to remain competitive and compatible with its economic trading partners, Canada would also have to make investments towards bolstering its electrical grid.

Focusing on the budget as a whole, several expressed that the measures they had discussed had improved their impressions of the federal government's overall aims. While it was generally felt that the success of this budget would ultimately be determined by how effectively these initiatives were implemented in the months to come, most thought that the priority areas identified by the Government of Canada were the right ones to be focusing on going forward. Most believed that these initiatives, if fulfilled, would have a vastly positive impact on the economy, environment, and the overall health of Canadians.

Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Branding (Major Centres Alberta)

Participants in one group took part in a discussion related to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) and potential visual concepts and phrases designed to educate Canadians about *The Online Streaming Act* (Bill C-11). Very few reported being aware of CRTC and its mandate. Presented with a visual concept currently under development by the CRTC related to the Act, participants were mixed in their initial impressions. Though the overall concept was thought by most to be positive, friendly, and modern, a small number felt differently. Among these participants it was thought that the combination of red, orange, and green in some panels was visually unappealing and reminded them of a traffic light. Additionally, the images depicting cameras were described as restrictive and somewhat crowded compared to the images without cameras, which were believed to evoke a greater sense of community and free expression.

Focusing on the text accompanying the concept, participants were presented with a list of potential phrases that could be used as part of this campaign. Among these options, participants expressed similar levels of support for *Your stories your way*, *A modern Broadcasting Act*, and *More stories your way*. No participants selected *Our stories your way*. For those who favoured *A modern Broadcasting Act*, it was felt that this slogan was the most straightforward and could help to address potential concerns related to online censorship believed by participants to be associated with *The Online Streaming Act*. It was believed that *Your Stories your way* effectively conveyed the message that this Act would help to amplify the content that matters most to Canadians, while several thought that *More stories your way* was the most progressive of the options, and believed it spoke to the inclusion of more stories reflecting the diversity of Canadian society and the importance of showcasing a variety of perspectives.

Carbon Pricing (Northern Ontario, Small and Mid-Size Centres Atlantic Canada)

Two groups engaged in a conversation related to the federal government's carbon pricing system. Asked whether they had seen, read, or heard anything about carbon pricing in Canada, most indicated that they had. While some spoke positively of the introduction of a federal price on carbon, believing that it would assist in encouraging more sustainable behaviours and decreasing emissions, a roughly equal number were more negative in their perspectives. Among these participants it was felt that the implementation of a price on carbon had contributed to rising costs for consumers, making it more difficult for some Canadians to afford essential goods and services. Only a small number were aware of the term 'climate action incentive payment'. While some assumed this referred to a payment provided to Canadians who engaged in more sustainable behaviours, others were of the impression that it primarily referred to rebates provided for actions such as the installation of solar panels or the purchase of a zero-emission vehicle (ZEV).

While most supported the federal government taking action to encourage Canadians to reduce their carbon footprints and engage in more sustainable behaviours, almost all believed that the carbon pricing system was too complicated and did not expect that this initiative would be effective in reducing emissions on a large scale. Many expressed confusion as to why a significant portion of the

revenue collected under this program was being returned to Canadians rather than being reinvested in sustainability initiatives and/or grants for home retrofitting projects. Discussing whether they believed that this initiative would have an impact on addressing climate change, almost all participants felt that it would not.

Climate Change (Nova Scotia Middle Class Parents, Northern British Columbia)

Two groups engaged in conversations related to the environment and climate change. These discussions centred on participant perspectives regarding the actions individuals can take to be more environmentally sustainable in their daily lives, as well as the potential impacts of climate change and the adaptations required to respond to this growing issue.

Climate Change Behaviours (Nova Scotia Middle Class Parents)

Those residing in Nova Scotia engaged in a discussion related to the actions and behaviours individuals can take to be more environmentally sustainable in their daily activities. Very few felt that individuals had a responsibility to help fight climate change, with several sharing the perspective that actions taken on the individual level would likely have little to no impact given the considerable size and scope of this issue. Asked to identify actions or behaviours that individuals could engage in to help mitigate the impacts of climate change, participant responses included recycling, purchasing products with less packaging, carpooling, working from home, or using active transportation methods such as cycling or walking when possible. Discussing which actions related to climate change they felt were most difficult to engage in, several cited the high financial costs of many environmentally beneficial actions such as home retrofitting projects, purchasing an electric vehicle (EV), and choosing to consume locally grown and/or organic food.

Asked whether they felt that the majority of Canadians cared about climate change, while some felt this to be the case, a roughly equal number were of the view that most were currently not very concerned about this issue. None thought that they cared more about climate change than most other Canadians, with almost all believing that their level of concern was similar to that of the majority of the population. Questioned whether they felt that individual actions performed collectively could have a positive impact on climate change, while some believed this to be the case others strongly felt that the focus instead needed to be on changing the practices of major industrial emitters. Discussing the actions the Government of Canada could take that would have the strongest positive impact on addressing climate change, participants mentioned potential initiatives such as tax incentives and grants for green energy investment and home retrofitting projects, increased taxes and/or penalties for corporate emissions, and the implementation of new and/or additional taxes upon the wealthiest Canadians to fund clean energy projects.

Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation (Northern British Columbia)

Participants from Northern British Columbia (B.C.) engaged in a conversation related to the potential impacts of climate change and the adaptations they expected would likely be required in response. Asked whether they felt climate change was having a major, minor, or no impact on their communities,

all believed its impact to be significant. All were concerned that climate change would continue to have a major impact on their communities in the future. Concerns were specifically raised regarding the potential reduced ability of farmers to grow crops and resulting food insecurity, the increasing cost of insurance against natural disasters, and potential mental health challenges related to stress and anxiety of dealing with this issue.

Discussing whether their communities were prepared to deal with the impacts of climate change, many felt that they were not. Describing potential measures that could be taken to improve their communities' preparedness for the impacts of climate change, it was thought that it would be of critical importance to build more resilient cellular and internet networks. All felt that it was crucial for the federal government to provide assistance to communities as they prepare to confront the impacts of climate change. Provided with a list of priorities from the Government of Canada on this front, participants largely believed that these represented a strong approach towards addressing this issue. Asked to identify what they felt to be the most important priorities on this list, it was thought that investments towards infrastructure that protects Canadians from climate-related disasters and support for regions that are particularly vulnerable to climate change (including Canada's North and coastal regions) would have the most impact.

Federal Government Services (Major Centres Prairies Frequent Users of Federal Services)

Participants in one group took part in a discussion related to services provided by the federal government. All reported having frequently accessed federal services and/or had done so recently. Asked to identify the types of services delivered by the federal government, participants mentioned a range of areas, including the issuing of passports, tax collection, and programs such as the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), Old Age Security (OAS), the Canada Child Benefit (CCB), and Employment Insurance (EI). Most were positive in their evaluations of the Government of Canada's delivery of these services. Several specifically mentioned the passport renewal process, believing this to have been a seamless and streamlined experience. A number also spoke positively of the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) website, and the MyCRA account more specifically. It was thought that this service was highly secure and trustworthy, and enabled Canadians to prepare and file their annual taxes in a quick and efficient manner.

Asked which services they had recently accessed, participants recalled engaging in actions such as renewing their passports through Service Canada, filing their annual income taxes via the CRA, applying for EI, and accessing immigration services through Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). It was widely thought that these services had been delivered in a timely manner, and no participants reported experiencing unreasonable delays. Discussing whether their experience had impacted their impression of the Government of Canada, many expressed positive views, stating that their experiences had given them a more positive opinion of federal departments and agencies. Questioned whether they felt service delivery was a priority for the Government of Canada, few believed that it was. A number commented that while their own personal experiences had been positive, they had also heard many accounts of long waits and difficulties accessing a range of federal services and benefits. Suggesting ways that the Government of Canada might improve service delivery

for Canadians, many believed that greater resources needed to be invested into agencies and departments such as Service Canada, the CRA, and IRCC, especially in terms of hiring more staff to process applications and address inquiries. It was also thought that streamlining different services and increasing communication amongst federal departments and agencies would likely lead to a better overall experience for Canadians.

Cost of Living (Nova Scotia Middle Class Parents)

Participants in one group took part in a conversation related to the current cost of living. All felt that the Government of Canada was on the wrong track in its management of this issue and the Canadian economy more generally. Participants provided several reasons for this view, including the belief that federal spending was too high, the size of the federal government was too large, and that too much funding had been provided towards foreign assistance to countries such as Ukraine rather than addressing domestic issues facing Canadians.

No participants felt that the Government of Canada currently understood the economic issues presently facing Canadians. Discussing areas which had become less affordable as of late, participants identified numerous essentials such as groceries, gasoline, personal automobiles, and housing. Several also felt that it had become increasingly difficult to save money for the future, as a greater portion of their monthly pay was now going towards everyday expenses. Asked whether they had recently seen, read, or heard about any work from the Government of Canada on these fronts, some mentioned the recently announced one-time Grocery Rebate. Most, however, expected that they would not be eligible for this support, believing it was only available to lower-income Canadians.

Discussing the factors that they felt were contributing to the rising cost of living, participants suggested a range of potential drivers. These included the implementation of the federal carbon pricing system, perceived high federal spending, and increases to federal and provincial minimum wages. Almost all were of the view that the rising cost of living was a global problem, rather than one which was specifically impacting Canadians. Several, however, felt that even if the problem was global in nature, the federal government needed to be doing more to address rising costs and making life more affordable for Canadians.

Provided with details related to programs such as the Canada Child Benefit (CCB), Canada Dental Benefit (CDB), and agreements related to the provision of \$10 a day, on average, child care, participants were largely negative in their reactions to this information. Many commented that they would not qualify for the CDB and felt this support needed to be expanded to a larger number of Canadians. Discussing the initiatives related to affordable early learning and child care, several believed that the delivery of the program had not been satisfactory thus far and that it was still difficult for families to access affordable child care in their communities due to a lack of available spots. While the CCB was thought to be the most impactful program among participants, a number felt that the amounts offered did little to address the financial challenges faced by middle class families.

Cryptocurrency (Major City Centres Ontario Financial Sector Workers)

Participants in the group comprised of financial sector workers residing in Ontario engaged in a brief discussion related to cryptocurrency. Though all were familiar with the concept of cryptocurrency, many struggled to provide a precise definition. Asked to identify the benefits which might be associated with owning cryptocurrency, many suggested that there was the potential for rapid increases in value and believed that cryptocurrency assets were highly secure from hacking or theft. Others also were of the impression that cryptocurrency was not subject to the inflation experienced by government-issued currency. Discussing concerns and risks related to cryptocurrency, many expressed concerns about the increased potential of fraud related to these digital assets. A large number also expressed reservations about the perceived volatility of cryptocurrency as well as the lack of regulation and oversight of cryptocurrency and associated trading platforms. While understanding these concerns, few felt that cryptocurrency should be regulated by the federal government. A small number believed that greater efforts should instead be taken by the federal government to educate Canadians about cryptocurrency, enabling them to better understand the potential risks and benefits of investing in these assets.

Online Safety (Major Centres Quebec Frequent Media Consumers, Major Centres Saskatchewan and Manitoba, Mid-Size and Major Centres Quebec, Small and Mid-Size Centres Atlantic Canada)

Participants in four groups engaged in conversations related to online safety. Asked to identify what they felt to be the most positive aspects of the internet and the online world on society today, a range of positive aspects were mentioned. These included increased communication with family and friends, the advent of remote and online work and education options, and the relative ease of access to a wide array of information and entertainment. Describing the potential drawbacks of the internet and the online world, participants shared a number of concerns, including the potential overreliance on digital information, a loss of personal privacy, vulnerability to online scams, issues related to internet addiction, and the growing spread of hateful content online.

Discussing what the term 'online safety' meant to them, several mentioned the issue of keeping children safe from harmful content or communicating with potentially dangerous individuals on social media and other digital platforms. For others the term was also associated with encryption and the security of one's digital passwords and information. Many were concerned specifically about the impact of the internet on younger generations, and especially children, who they believed would likely be less cognizant of potential online dangers. A number reiterated the potential harms of online hate, including the harassment and cyberbullying of racialized Canadians and other vulnerable groups.

Asked what 'online harms' meant to them, while few were familiar with the term, most speculated that it likely referred to online attacks on individuals as well as financial harms resulting from fraudulent transactions or scams. Discussing what sort of online content could be considered harmful, many described posts and/or images which focused on disparaging and spreading hate towards racialized Canadians, members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community, and other groups. Asked whether they had

personally encountered harmful content online, many mentioned having seen hateful comments on social media platforms such as Facebook as well as in the comments sections on YouTube and online news articles.

Almost all felt more should be done to address harmful content online. Discussing what actions should be taken, several believed it was the responsibility of individuals, and parents especially, to educate themselves about the dangers of harmful online content and how best to communicate these concerns to their children. Asked if they were aware of any actions currently being taken on this front, a few were of the impression that digital platforms had begun adjusting their algorithms to filter out hateful content as well as make it easier for users to block and/or report any hateful content they encounter. Discussing whether online platforms should be responsible for harmful content on their services, participants were mixed in their opinions. Among those who felt it was the responsibility of platforms to prevent harmful content from being posted on their services, it was thought that greater efforts needed to be taken by the platforms to moderate harmful content and that financial penalties should be levied upon companies that did not take action to remove hateful posts and images.

Misinformation (Major Centres Quebec Frequent Media Consumers)

The group comprised of frequent media consumers residing in Quebec engaged in an extended discussion related to online misinformation and disinformation. Discussing what they believed to be the differences between misinformation and disinformation, some suggested that while misinformation referred to the unintentional sharing of false information, disinformation was characterized by deliberate attempts to mislead.

All reported having encountered misinformation or disinformation online. Most reported that social media was the primary source of misinformation or disinformation in their lives. Asked how they would go about verifying the accuracy of the information they encountered online, many commented that they would likely check the source to determine whether or not it is reliable, compare the information they encountered with other news sites and sources, and/or seek advice from knowledgeable experts in the subject area.

Discussing actions that could be taken to mitigate online misinformation and disinformation, participants stressed the role of individual responsibility in ensuring one was using reliable sources. It was also felt that digital platforms had a responsibility to ensure that the news and information hosted on their platforms was accurate. The view was expressed that while the federal government had an important role to play in preventing the circulation of misinformation and disinformation, this should not come at the expense of the right of Canadians to freely express themselves.

Artificial Intelligence (Major Centres Ontario Financial Sector Workers)

Participants in one group, comprised of financial sector workers from Ontario, engaged in a brief discussion regarding artificial intelligence (AI). Asked how closely they had been following recent developments related to AI, while some reported closely following developments in AI and utilizing AI services, others reported following its development while not using it, and others were highly skeptical

of AI and concerned about the risks of its potential misuse. Most were unsure of any recent developments related to this technology in the financial sector and did not believe it was widely used in the industry.

Discussing the benefits of AI, participants cited its improved efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and the ability to complete tedious or repetitive tasks that would otherwise have to be undertaken by humans. Many were of the view that it could help workers and companies improve their productivity and lead to a rapid development of new skills and capabilities across many sectors. Considering the potential negative aspects of AI, participants expressed concerns about bias, ethics, and reduced originality of AI-generated content when compared to text written by humans. A small number felt that there was a risk of humans developing a dependence on AI, which may reduce critical thinking and lead to other negative outcomes.

Asked how the Government of Canada should respond to new developments in the field of AI, participants expressed a variety of different views. Many felt that federal regulation was necessary to ensure public safety and reduce the potential for job loss and the spread of disinformation. Several advocated for the implementation of stronger regulations as the technology continued to develop, with the potential to review these rules in the future. A number stressed the importance of the federal government to act quickly on this front and shared concerns that a lack of decisive action could lead to humans potentially losing control over the development of this technology.

Community Safety (Major Centres Saskatchewan and Manitoba, Small and Mid-Size Centres Atlantic Canada, G.T.A. Public Transit Users, Quebec City Working Seniors)

Four groups took part in discussions related to community safety and the current rate of crime in their communities. Asked to describe the most pressing issues facing their communities, several mentioned a perceived rise in crime, including thefts, break-ins, and violent crimes such as physical assaults and stabbings. A large number in the groups based in Saskatchewan and Manitoba as well as the Greater Toronto Area (G.T.A.) identified issues related to the rising cost of living, homelessness, addiction, and mental health. While most indicated feeling relatively safe in their respective communities (especially those living rurally), a large number were of the impression that crime rates had been rising in nearby urban centres such as Toronto, Montreal, Regina, Halifax, and Moncton.

Asked if they could recall any actions taken by the Government of Canada to address rising crime, participants in all groups mentioned recent initiatives to strengthen firearms restrictions in Canadian communities, including the prohibition on the buying and selling of handguns as well as bans on a wide range of assault-style firearms. Discussing what more could be done to address the issue of rising crime, many believed that there needed to be an increased focus on making life more affordable for vulnerable Canadians, especially in terms of their ability to afford groceries and secure safe and affordable housing. It was felt that this would reduce the need of these individuals to engage in criminal behaviour to meet their basic needs. A number also believed that greater efforts needed to be taken to develop educational initiatives and after-school programming targeted towards younger Canadians, who it was believed were more prone to engaging in criminal behaviours and participating in street gangs.

Bail Reform (G.T.A. Frequent Users of Public Transit, Small and Mid-Size Centres Atlantic Canada, Quebec City Working Seniors)

Three groups engaged in extended conversations related to bail reform. Discussing whether they had seen, read, or heard anything related to the bail process in Canada, while a small number were of the impression that changes to the system were currently being considered by the federal government, none could recall any specific details. A number spoke negatively of the current system and were of the impression that it was relatively easy at present for repeat offenders to be offered bail. It was believed by several that a significant proportion of individuals out on bail often did not abide by the conditions of their release and engaged in further criminal activity. Asked whether they felt that the current bail system was fair, participants expressed a range of opinions. Among those who felt the system was fair, it was thought that bail was an essential part of the criminal justice system and was critical to maintaining the presumption of innocence of those who had not been formally convicted of a crime. Describing the reasons why individuals released on bail may re-offend, several believed that these were often crimes of desperation and were closely related to economic circumstances, struggles with addiction, or mental health concerns.

Presented with information detailing the actions the Government of Canada was currently considering taking regarding reforms to the bail system almost all reacted positively. It was felt by many that taking these steps would have a significant impact towards making Canadian communities safer and ensuring that those previously found guilty of violent crimes were not provided with opportunities to engage in further criminal behaviour while released on bail. Asked what more the federal government could be doing to address crime in Canada, several believed that a greater focus needed to be placed on expanding mental health and addictions resources to vulnerable individuals, believing these to be key drivers of the perceived rising crime rate in recent years. A number were also of the opinion that a greater focus needed to be placed on reintegrating those released from prison back into society. It was believed that if provided with greater educational, employment, and financial resources that these individuals would be much less likely to re-offend upon their release.

French Language Protection and Promotion (Quebec City Working Seniors)

Participants residing in Quebec City took part in a brief conversation regarding the importance of protecting and promoting the French language in Canada. All believed that this was a priority of critical importance for the Government of Canada. Asked to describe the current state of the French language in Canada, a number believed that French language services outside of Quebec continued to be limited relative to those available in English. Most were unaware of any efforts by the Government of Canada to protect and promote the French language.

Participants next discussed the Government of Canada's *Action Plan for Official Languages*. Provided with information related to the key objectives of this plan, participants most were positive in their reactions. It was widely thought that these measures would be effective towards protecting and promoting the French language both in Quebec and the rest of Canada. Among participants the initiatives to increase Francophone immigration, invest in language training for newcomers, and invest in Francophone child care services were expected to be the most impactful. Discussing additional

steps that the federal government could undertake to promote and protect the French language in Canada, it was thought that it should introduce requirements for national transportation services, such as airlines and rail services, to implement minimum French language proficiency standards for their employees.

Local Issues (Northern British Columbia)

Participants in the group from Northern British Columbia (B.C.) engaged in a discussion focusing on a number of issues specific to their region. Asked to describe the most significant issues facing Northern B.C., many mentioned a perceived widespread lack of safe and affordable housing. This was believed to have had a considerable negative impact on many communities in the region, contributing to high rates of homelessness and the growing departure of younger people. Transportation was also identified as an issue, with several commented that their communities lacked access to adequate road and rail networks.

Asked to identify the most industries and sectors in their respective communities, several mentioned sectors such as mining, forestry, oil, and gas. Several expressed that agriculture, tourism, and clean energy generation were also important for their communities. Discussing the local sectors and industries that required the most help, several identified the recent closures of a number of mills as having been very damaging for the forestry sector in the region, including job losses in many communities. Asked what the federal government could do to better support these sectors, it was suggested that it could work more closely with private companies and Indigenous leaders to determine the best ways to develop natural resources in the region.

Almost all felt that projects involving the mining of critical minerals (such as those used in many clean energy technologies) were likely to lead to considerable economic benefits for their region. Several expressed concerns that ongoing labour shortages in the region communities could impede the operation of any critical mineral projects and it was felt that the Government of Canada should take additional efforts to bring in more non-Canadians to work in these sectors.

MORE INFORMATION

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