



Attitudes Related to Gender-Based Violence and #MeToo in Canada – Executive Summary

Prepared for Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE)

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Executive Summary

Earnscliffe Strategy Group (Earnscliffe) is pleased to present *Attitudes Related to Gender-Based Violence and #MeToo in Canada – Final Report to Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE)*. This report summarizes the results of quantitative research in order to develop foundational knowledge of people living in Canada's impressions of gender-based violence (GBV) and gender equality (GE), harassment and violence in the workplace and GBV social movements.

Preventing and addressing GBV in Canada is a key pillar of WAGE's work to advance equality with respect to sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity or expression. The rise in prominence of GBV social movements over the past two years has sparked a global conversation about sexual harassment and violence, particularly in the workplace, and has highlighted the ongoing need to address GBV in Canada today. WAGE commissioned research to better understand people in Canada's awareness and impression of GBV-related social movements, specifically #MeToo, perceptions of GBV, harassment and violence in the workplace, the justice system's handling of sexual assault, and GE more broadly.

The research focused on exploring respondents' opinions about GBV in Canada, including questions ranking their concern about various topics and their attitudes towards GBV and social movements, such as #MeToo. Feedback from this research will help WAGE better understand perceptions of social movements related to GBV and inform future efforts to shift attitudes in Canada that contribute to gendered inequalities and GBV. It will also inform WAGE's engagement with future partnerships and provide a baseline measure of attitudes. The results of this research will also complement other WAGE studies that explore baseline attitudes related to gender roles, diversity, gender identity and expression, as well as work underway with Statistics Canada to implement three new national surveys related to GBV, and sexual harassment and misconduct among post-secondary students and in the workplace. The contract value of this research was \$69,561.67, including HST.

Earnscliffe used a quantitative approach to meet these objectives, using both online and telephone modes of data collection, with a total of 2,244 people in Canada. The survey was conducted with people living in Canada ages 18 or older. Participation in the survey was voluntary and respondents were able to opt out of answering any questions. Quotas were set to ensure sufficient sample sizes to conduct analysis on a regional level. The quota structure was as follows:

- 400 interviews in Atlantic Canada (Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia);
- 400 interviews in Quebec;
- 400 interviews in Ontario;
- 200 interviews in the Prairies (Manitoba, Saskatchewan);
- 200 interviews in Alberta;
- 400 interviews in British Columbia; and
- 200 interviews in the Territories.

The surveys in Atlantic Canada, Quebec, Ontario, the Prairies, Alberta and British Columbia were conducted online, using Earnscliffe's data collection partner, Léger's, proprietary online panel on April 15, 2019 (pretest) and from May 21 to June 3, 2019. The survey was an average of 18 minutes in length.

The surveys in the Territories were conducted by telephone from Léger’s centralized call centre using their state-of-the-art Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system on April 15, 2019 (pretest) and from May 21 to June 6, 2019. The telephone survey averaged 28 minutes in length.

The data was weighted to reflect the demographic composition of the population of Canada aged 18 and older.

Because the sample is based on those who initially self-selected for participation in the panel, no estimates of sampling error can be calculated. The treatment here of the non-probability sample is aligned with the Standards for the Conduct of Government of Canada Public Opinion Research for online surveys.

The key findings from the research are presented below.

- Following weighting of the survey respondents, here is the demographic profile on some key demographic variables. Of people who responded to the survey, 1,154 identified as women, 1,082 as men, and 9 as other; 2,041 identified their sexuality as heterosexual, 74 as homosexual (lesbian or gay), 80 as bisexual, and 43 indicated having another sexual orientation; 82 respondents indicated being an Indigenous person; 1,814 indicated having been born in Canada, and 421 indicated having been born in a country outside of Canada.
- Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they are concerned about a series of current topics. Health care (47% extremely, 36% somewhat concerned), the environment (39% extremely, 38% somewhat concerned) and the economy (34% extremely, 45% somewhat concerned) make up the top three issues with the largest proportion of respondents indicating concern. However, sexual assault is a close fourth, with almost three-quarters (71%) reporting they find it concerning, including 31% who are extremely concerned. A variety of issues make up the next tier, including sexual harassment (25% extremely, 40% somewhat concerned), immigration (27% extremely, 35% somewhat concerned) and creating jobs (27% extremely, 44% somewhat concerned). Gender equality, along with Indigenous issues, is among the set of issues respondents find least concerning. That said, one in five (20%) are extremely concerned about GE, along with 32% who are somewhat concerned. When it comes to Indigenous issues, 14% are extremely concerned, and 35% are somewhat concerned.
- While not the top issue, almost two-thirds of respondents are concerned about sexual harassment (66%). Gender equality is one of the issues that concerns the fewest respondents, though just over half (52%) do express some concern.
 - Women respondents express more concern about sexual harassment, sexual assault and GE than men who responded. For example, three-quarters (75%) of women are concerned about sexual harassment, including 31% who are extremely concerned, compared to just over half of men (55%).
- The vast majority agree that consent is required before initiating sex (96%), intimate touching (94%) or kissing (90%).
 - However, not all respondents feel that consent must be verbal, particularly when it comes to kissing. Fewer, though still the majority, agree putting your arm around someone (74%) or holding hands (71%) require consent of some sort.
 - Men who responded to this survey are more likely than women to believe that consent does not need to be verbal. For example, almost a third of men (29%) say that consent for sex could be non-verbal, compared to 19% of women. Similarly, 40% of men, compared to 29% of women, think consent could be non-verbal for intimate touching.

- Respondents are more concerned that women will be sexually assaulted (83%) or harassed (82%) than falsely accused of either (50% are concerned about false accusations of sexual assault, while 51% are concerned about false accusations of sexual harassment).
 - In contrast, respondents are more concerned that men will be falsely accused of sexual assault (71%) or harassment (72%) than they are that men will be sexually assaulted (50%) or harassed (49%).
 - More men than women are concerned they will personally be falsely accused of sexual assault (48% of men vs. 36% of women) and harassment (50% of men and 38% of women).
- Almost three-quarters of respondents (71%) are somewhat or very familiar with the #MeToo movement, and almost two-thirds (64%) believe social movements focused on GBV like #MeToo have a positive impact.
 - Women hold more positive impressions of the #MeToo movement than men (70% very or somewhat positive vs. 58%).
 - Those who believe the impact has been positive, point to the movement's ability to raise awareness (39%) and to allow people to speak out against GBV (30%).
 - Almost half of those who have a negative view feel the movement has gone too far (42%).
- The majority of respondents believe that #MeToo has resulted in several other positive outcomes, including:
 - A better understanding of sexual consent (65%) – more women (70%) than men (60%) agree;
 - Less shame associated with reporting sexual harassment or assault (65%);
 - Canadians are now more likely to seek consent prior to engaging in sexual activity (58%). Note that men are more likely to agree with this statement than women (62% vs. 55%); and,
 - Victims are more likely to be believed (57%).
- Despite the numerous impacts that the majority of respondents agree are positive, when asked, there are some issues upon which respondents are divided. In particular, men often feel more strongly than women that #MeToo has had negative impacts. More specifically:
 - 44% of men, compared to 31% of women, think the #MeToo movement had increased the number of false reports of sexual assault to police;
 - Just over half of men (53%) compared to 39% of women agree the #MeToo movement has made it harder to know the difference between flirting and sexual harassment; and,
 - Slightly less than half (42%) of men agree that #MeToo has made the issues of sexual harassment and sexual assault seem like much bigger problems than they actually are, compared to under a third of women (27%).
- Survey responses indicate some uncertainty about the Canadian justice system's handling of sexual assault. For example, the vast majority of respondents (82%) believes that those who experience a sexual assault should always report it to the police, but only 43% believe that the police investigate most cases.
- Opinion is mixed over whether the media should identify people who are accused of sexual harassment or assault, regardless of whether they are a public figure or a private citizen. About half (54%) agree the media should identify a public figure accused of sexual harassment or assault, while 46% feel the same way about the media identifying private citizens who have been accused.
- Just under half of respondents agree that #MeToo has changed the way they interact with both male (46%) and female (48%) coworkers.

- More men agree that #MeToo has changed the way they interact with women coworkers (53%) compared to the proportion of women who say it has changed their interactions with men coworkers (44%).
- Some of those who have changed their behaviour say they have become more mindful about the movement and the issues it highlights (19%) and careful of the comments they make (21%).
- The vast majority agrees that one co-worker asking another, regardless of gender, for sexual favours, persisting in unwanted attention or looking at private parts constitute sexual harassment. Commenting on a coworker's appearance or asking them for drinks or lunch are more widely viewed as appropriate behaviours.
 - For example, 88% agree that a man asking a woman at work for sexual favours constitutes sexual harassment. Two-thirds also agree that placing a hand on a woman's lower back at work (65%) or making sexual jokes (65%) would be inappropriate. Fewer view commenting on a woman's appearance (35%) or asking her for drinks (18%) or lunch (12%) as inappropriate.
 - Similarly, requesting a sexual favour (85%) is widely viewed as sexual harassment if done by a woman to a man at work. Commenting on a male co-worker's appearance (35%) or asking him to go for a drink (19%) or lunch (12%) are not as widely viewed as inappropriate.

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Signed:



Date: July 5, 2019

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