

Privy Council Office Quantitative and Qualitative -Spring 2015 Research Report-

Executive Summary



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**Prepared for:
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Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français

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Executive Summary

Harris/Decima is pleased to present this report of research findings to the Privy Council Office. This project involved researching Canadians' impressions of a number of current issues affecting Canada and Canadians, and efforts that the government might pursue to address those issues.

Harris/Decima assessed, through qualitative and quantitative means, the perceptions of Canadians on the state of current events. This report details qualitative research findings only. Quantitative research tables are provided under separate cover and are included as part of the submission of this report.

Objectives

Through the use of a survey and focus groups, PCO explored the perceptions of Canadians on the state of current events, which included, for example, their opinions on the current state of the economy.

This input was needed because complex issues are often difficult to communicate to the Canadian public in a manner that is easily and clearly understood. By carrying out this research, PCO was able to ensure a better understanding of the views and concerns of the public so as to develop effective communications strategies and products.

The total contract value of the research was \$149,976.94 (including HST).

Methodology

Harris/Decima conducted a two-part research program for PCO during the spring of 2015. The research program included a comprehensive survey with 3,000 adult Canadians, and focus groups across the country. This approach was in line with PCO's expectations.

Qualitative Phase

The focus group component of the research was conducted with members of the general population in seven locations across the country. In each location, one group was composed of individuals living in lower and middle income households, and one group of those in higher income households, utilizing a formula that weighs two-income and single income households appropriately.

A series of fourteen focus groups were conducted between May 20 and June 1, 2015. Two groups were conducted in each of Edmonton, AB; North Vancouver, BC; Abbotsford, BC; Kitchener, ON; Scarborough, ON, Moncton, NB and Quebec City, QC. Groups in Quebec City were conducted in French; and in all other locations in English.

The sessions were standard in-person focus groups of two hours in length. Twelve people were recruited and confirmed, aiming for between eight and ten participants. They each received an honorarium of \$75 in appreciation for their time. Depending on the day of week, sessions were either conducted in the evening or during the day.

The following table summarizes the specifics of the project:

City	Date	Group 1: Lower/ Middle income Number of participants	Group 1: Higher income Number of participants	Language
Edmonton, AB	May 20, 2015	10	7	English
North Vancouver, BC	May 21, 2015	9	8	English
Abbotsford, BC	May 23, 2015	9	7	English
Kitchener, ON	May 25, 2015	8	8	English
Scarborough, ON	May 26, 2015	11	7	English
Moncton, NB	May 27, 2015	9	10	English
Quebec City, QC	June 1, 2015	10	10	French
		66	57	

Appended to this report are the recruitment screeners (see Appendix A) and discussion guides (see Appendix B) in both official languages.

NOTE: For the purposes of this report, it is important to note that focus group research is a form of scientific, social, policy and public opinion research. Focus groups are structured, restricted, group interviews that proceed according to a careful research design and attention to the principles of group dynamics. They should be distinguished from “discussion groups”, “problem-solving groups”, “buzz groups”, or “brainstorming groups”. They are not designed to help a group reach a consensus or to make decisions, but rather to elicit the full range of ideas, attitudes, experiences and opinions of a selected sample of participants on a defined topic. Because of the nature of focus of focus groups (e.g. the impact of group dynamics, a lack of standardization in how questions are asked, etc.), findings cannot be assumed to be representative of the larger population.

Quantitative Phase

The 11-minute quantitative survey was conducted by Harris/Decima and is based on 3,010 telephone interviews conducted between May 20 and June 1, 2015. The sampling method was designed to complete 3,000 interviews with the target audience of Canadians 18 years of age and over. From within each multi-person household contacted, respondents 18 years of age and older were screened for random selection using the “most recent birthday” method. The use of this technique produces results that are as valid and effective as enumerating all persons within a household and selecting one randomly. The sample was stratified to ensure meaningful data and analysis at the provincial level. The data was statistically weighted by region, gender and age according to the most recently available Census information (2011). The margin of error for a sample of 3,010 is +/- 1.8 percentage points, in 19 times out of 20 (margin of error is greater for subgroups).

A more detailed description of the methodology is presented at the back of the report (see Appendix C), along with a copy of the questionnaire in both official languages (see Appendix D). Quantitative research tables are provided under separate cover and are included as part of the submission of this report.

Key Findings

Participants in the sessions felt that the Government of Canada should focus on a number of areas. These include:

- **Employment.** Participants in the sessions identified job creation as well as helping those who are underemployed to secure long-term employment as areas of focus.
- **Security.** Some participants were concerned with security in Canada. These participants tended to reference the shooting on Parliament Hill as an example of why national security should be a focus for the federal government.
- **Natural Resources.** Some participants felt that there should be a focus on diversifying natural resources, as well as ensuring that the oil extraction process is conducted responsibly.
- **Oil Prices.** In some sessions, oil prices were identified by participants as an area of focus for the federal government. In particular, they were concerned with the potential impact of lower oil prices on the overall economy.
- **Immigration.** A number of participants wanted the federal government to focus on immigration. This sentiment was specific to credential recognition for those who have recently come to Canada.
- **Infrastructure.** Some mentioned that infrastructure should be a priority. These participants focused on the need to ensure adequate funding for infrastructure maintenance. It was also suggested that the federal government make public transportation a priority.

The general sentiment about the economy was cautious. There was a sense that the economy was slowing down when compared to previous years. Two factors primarily contributed to this impression:

- **Oil prices.**
- **Value of the Canadian dollar.**

While many were cautious in describing the Canadian economy, a number of participants felt that Canada was doing better in comparison to other countries.

However, some felt that the economy of the United States was gaining more momentum than the Canadian economy.

When asked if they had seen or heard about a group called “the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, known as ISIS”, there was a high degree of awareness of the group by name.

Some only knew the name whereas others offered views on what ISIS is doing worldwide. The perception of Canada’s role was vague, with few clearly articulating specific roles or steps that the Government of Canada has taken. When asked if they support or oppose the Canadian Armed Forces to launch air strikes against ISIS and train soldiers on the ground in Iraq, participants were polarized and there was no clear consensus on what approach the Government of Canada should take.

Research Firm: Harris/Decima Inc.

Contract Number: 35035-155026/001/CY

Contract award date: May 11, 2015

Harris/Decima Inc. certifies that the final deliverables comply with the political neutrality requirement in section 6.2.4 of the Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research in the Government of Canada.

Megan Tam, Vice President

Harris/Decima Inc.