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Public Opinion Research

in the Government of Canada

ANNUAL REPORT 2010–2011

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Public Works and
Government Services
Canada

Travaux publics et
Services gouvernementaux
Canada

Canada



Public Opinion Research in the Government of Canada

Annual Report 2010–2011

Published by Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC)
Spring 2012

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Internet version:

<http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/rop-por/rapports-reports/2010-2011/tm-toc-eng.html>

Catalogue Number: P100-1/2011E-PDF
ISSN: 1715-9067

Introduction

This report provides an overview of government-wide¹ public opinion research activities coordinated and contracted by Public Works and Government Services Canada on behalf of departments in the 2010–2011 fiscal year. Our work supports the government’s commitment to ensure that public opinion research activities are well coordinated, transparent and provide value for money to taxpayers.

Definition of Public Opinion Research

Public opinion research in the Government of Canada is the planned gathering, by or for a government institution, of opinions, attitudes, perceptions, judgments, feelings, ideas and reactions or views intended to be used for any government purpose, whether that information is collected from persons (including employees of government institutions), representatives of businesses, institutions or other entities, through quantitative or qualitative methods irrespective of size or cost.

Public opinion research (POR) is a valuable source of information used by the Government of Canada to incorporate a citizen focus in the development, implementation and evaluation of policies, programs and services. These studies provide useful insight into the awareness, views, and current needs of Canadians as they apply to important issues such as children’s health and safety, job creation, food safety and elder abuse. POR uses reliable, impartial and systematic methods to collect opinions of Canadians as a whole or those that could be most affected by particular Government of Canada programs, policies and activities. Real-time feedback can also be obtained with POR, which can benefit Canadians in times of emergency or rapidly evolving crises.

Results collected through POR are used to develop and evaluate policies, programs, services and initiatives. With them, government can measure its progress in improving service quality, and plan and evaluate communications, advertising and other activities. This helps ensure government activities are achieving their intended results, and are well managed and responsive to the needs of Canadians.

¹ The policy is mandatory for departments identified in Schedules I, I.1 and II of the *Financial Administration Act*, unless excluded by specific acts, regulations, or Orders In Council. Agents of Parliament are exempt under the provisions covering POR.

A Year in Review

Public opinion research undertaken by the Government of Canada can be divided into the following three areas of application:

- Taking into Account Canadians' Needs;
- Serving Canadians Better; and
- Informing Canadians.

In 2010–2011, a total of 136 projects were conducted, of which 53 projects were conducted to strengthen policies and develop communications initiatives that take into account Canadians' needs, 34 projects were conducted to understand how the Canadian population views government services and to measure how satisfied they are with the services provided; and 49 provided the Government of Canada with information on its efforts to help keep Canadians informed of government programs, policies and services (see Table 1).

Table 1: Areas of Application for Public Opinion Research

	Contract Value ²	% Contract Value	Number of Projects ²	% Number of Projects
Taking into Account Canadians' Needs	\$3,358,502	43%	53	39%
Serving Canadians Better	\$2,538,814	32%	34	25%
Informing Canadians	\$2,005,555	25%	49	36%
Total:	\$7,902,871	100%	136	100%

Taking into Account Canadians' Needs

Government uses POR to identify the need for new or modified policies and programs. It allows government to better understand the public's perspective on a given subject, gain knowledge of Canadians' experiences with specific programs, and identify the best approaches to reach out to Canadians. In turn, tailored policy and program development and outreach initiatives help Canadians make informed decisions about their health, safety and security. This includes:

- **Communications strategy development:** This type of research measures awareness, attitudes and behavioural intentions for the development of communications strategies. It helps identify the best approaches to reach out to the public and helps develop and refine information vehicles, such as guides and brochures.

² The number of projects and contract values represent contractual transactions issued between April 1, 2010 and March 31, 2011 (including amendments to increase, cancel or reduce the value of the contracts issued from previous fiscal years).

- **Market research:** This type of research involves collecting information on attitudes, opinions and product attributes that will help in the design and delivery of programs and services and, in some cases, decisions regarding user fees.
- **Policy development research:** Government collects information on attitudes and opinions to develop public policies that reflect the needs and wants of Canadians, or specific stakeholder groups affected by those policies.
- **Web site usability testing:** Web site research involves the testing of new or revised Web pages, including their functionality, comprehensiveness and utility. Government departments test the content, format, features and ease of navigation of Web sites to ensure that they meet the needs of the intended user—most notably the Canadian public.

In 2010–2011, projects representing 43 percent of total POR contract value were conducted for this purpose. For an example of market research, see the Parks Canada study entitled [Cycling in the mountain parks quantitative research report](#).

Serving Canadians Better

POR is used to understand how people view government policies, programs and services and to measure how satisfied they are with the services provided. It also helps to understand how Canadians relate to these policies, programs and services. Government uses this information to design and tailor its services to achieve results, and in turn, better serve Canadians. This includes:

- **Policy and program research:** Government uses surveys and focus groups to evaluate the effectiveness and usefulness of programs and services, and the factors related to their utility.
- **Quality of service and client satisfaction measurement:** This type of research helps government understand users' experiences, interests in and priorities for services, key areas requiring improvement or change, drivers of client satisfaction, and optimal sources of information for clients, as well as current and future trends.
- **Internal organizational research:** This type of research includes employee surveys or focus groups that help government departments understand the needs and expectations of its employees. It assists in creating a more productive working environment.

In 2010–2011, studies conducted to better serve Canadians accounted for 32 percent of the total contract value of POR. For an example of policy and program research, see the Public Works and Government Services Canada study entitled [Depository Services Program \(DSP\) - Client Satisfaction Survey 2010](#).

Informing Canadians

Government has a duty to explain its policies and decisions and to inform Canadians of its programs and services. POR helps ensure that information about policies, programs and services is clear, realistic and targeted to appropriate audiences. This includes:

- **Pre-test government advertising:** The Government of Canada pre-tests advertising associated with major campaigns to ensure that funds are invested wisely and that messages are well communicated. Pre-testing is mandatory for campaigns with a media buy of \$400,000 or more.
- **Post-test government advertising:** Post-testing of advertising helps evaluate recall and recognition of advertising, as well as attitude and behaviour changes resulting from major campaigns. Post-testing is mandatory for campaigns with a media buy of \$1 million or more. The information from these studies is used to improve the planning and development of other information campaigns.
- **Communications product testing:** This type of research includes the evaluation of concepts, messages, content and creative design.

In 2010–2011, studies conducted to help inform Canadians accounted for 25 percent of the total contract value of POR. For an example of research on communications product testing, see the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada study entitled [*Focus groups to evaluate consumer comprehension of FCAC materials*](#).

Public Opinion Research Management in the Government of Canada

The Treasury Board [*Communications Policy of the Government of Canada*](#) sets out a framework for conducting public opinion research (POR) to ensure that POR activities are well coordinated, transparent and provide value for money. The policy is mandatory for departments identified in Schedules I, I.1 and II of the [*Financial Administration Act*](#), unless excluded by specific acts, regulations, or Orders In Council. The following Agents of Parliament are exempt under the provisions covering POR:

- Office of the Auditor General of Canada;
- Office of the Chief Electoral Officer;
- Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying of Canada;
- Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages;
- Offices of the Information and Privacy Commissioners of Canada; and
- Public Sector Integrity Canada.

This annual report outlines only POR activities coordinated through Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC).

Organizations with a Responsibility for Public Opinion Research

The [Communications Policy of the Government of Canada](#) assigns the following responsibilities to key bodies in POR (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Organizations with a Responsibility for Public Opinion Research



Appendices

Appendix I: Listing of Departments Engaged in Public Opinion Research in 2010–2011

In 2010–2011, the Public Opinion Research Directorate (PORD) coordinated 136 contracted public opinion research (POR) projects worth \$7.9 million, compared to 148 projects worth \$8.3 million the previous year.

Department/Agency	Number of Projects ¹	Contract Value ¹
Human Resources and Skills Development Canada ²	19	\$1,358,615.82
Health Canada ³	19	\$1,038,924.28
Canada Revenue Agency	17	\$857,902.64
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada	9	\$765,376.63
National Defence	5	\$482,808.80
Department of Finance Canada	8	\$434,699.70
Citizenship and Immigration Canada	7	\$337,063.21
Veterans Affairs Canada	4	\$291,185.34
Privy Council Office	4	\$277,459.30
Department of Justice	4	\$273,433.73
Royal Canadian Mounted Police	3	\$215,103.98
Public Works and Government Services Canada	4	\$213,958.25
Environment Canada	3	\$210,845.86
Canadian Food Inspection Agency	3	\$197,461.45
Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions	3	\$137,052.73
National Energy Board	1	\$112,985.31
Public Service Commission	2	\$97,196.95
Public Safety Canada	2	\$91,495.40
Library and Archives Canada	2	\$75,193.59
Canadian Heritage	3	\$68,962.82

¹ The number of projects and contract values represent contractual transactions issued between April 1, 2010 and March 31, 2011 (including amendments to increase, cancel or reduce the value of the contracts issued from previous fiscal years).

² Includes contracts issued under Human Resources and Social Development Canada.

³ Includes contracts issued under Public Health Agency of Canada. Contract value includes projects undertaken under task authorization contracts in the 2010–2011 fiscal year.

Financial Consumer Agency of Canada	1	\$55,341.75
Western Economic Diversification Canada	1	\$49,996.62
Canadian Grain Commission	1	\$45,616.41
Statistics Canada	1	\$44,347.53
Office of the Commissioner for Federal Judicial Affairs	1	\$32,653.49
Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada	1	\$32,368.85
National Film Board of Canada	1	\$27,447.70
Parks Canada	1	\$26,386.63
Public Service Labour Relations Board	1	\$22,741.25
Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency	2	\$20,453.00
National Research Council Canada	1	\$19,385.15
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada ⁴	1	\$3,865.36
Natural Resources Canada	1	\$-15,458.13 ⁵
Total :	136	\$7 902,871.40 \$

⁴ In June 2011, the name of Indian and Northern Development Canada was changed to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

⁵ In 2010-2011, a contract was amended to reduce the contract value of an existing project originally contracted during the 2009-2010 fiscal year. The result was a net decrease. No POR project was contracted in 2010-2011 for this Department.

Appendix II: Listing of Contractors Engaged in Public Opinion Research in 2010–2011

A total of 23 contractors were involved in POR during 2010–2011.

Supplier	Number of Projects ¹	Contract Value ¹
Ipsos-Reid Corporation	16	\$1,254,747.69
Ekos Research Associates Inc.	15	\$897,517.47
Environics Research Group	12	\$827,693.63
Phoenix SPI	9	\$752,029.34
TNS Canadian Facts Inc.	12	\$653,420.71
Harris/Decima Inc. ²	13	\$624,328.67
Léger Marketing	9	\$515,708.27
Gregg, Kelly, Sullivan & Woolstencroft: The Strategic Counsel	10	\$427,040.54
Phase 5	9	\$319,226.86
Corporate Research Associates Inc.	6	\$299,917.64
Sage Research Corporation	5	\$297,377.38
NRG Research Group	4	\$261,117.69
The Royal Canadian Legion	1	\$219,975.00
Vision Critical Communications Inc.	5	\$178,938.84
Walker Consulting Group	2	\$125,350.90
Holinshed Research Group Inc.	1	\$51,826.32
Patterson, Langlois Consultants	1	\$44,347.53
Sylvain Laroche, consultant, Inc.	1	\$37,793.70
Insightrix Research Inc.	1	\$26,386.63
Nanos Research Corporation	1	\$25,990.00
R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd.	1	\$22,741.25
torontoinsights.com	1	\$22,558.34
Satisfacts Research (SRG)	1	\$16,837.00
Total:	136	\$7,902,871.40

¹ The number of projects and contract values represent all contractual transactions (including amendments to increase, cancel or reduce the value of the contracts) issued between April 1, 2010 and March 31, 2011.

² Includes contracts awarded under Decima Research.

Appendix III: Population Segments Reached

POR is conducted among a wide variety of audiences. The table presents 52 specific target groups reached by POR studies conducted in 2010–2011.

Aboriginal Peoples
Adult Smokers
Agriculture Association Executives
Atlantic Canadians
At-risk Populations
Attendees of the Canada Pavilion
Businesses and Professionals
Canadian Consumers
Canadians Considering an Apprenticeship
Caregivers
Chief Executive Officers
Community Leaders
Credit Card Holders
Cyclists and Non-cyclists
Decision-makers
Employers and Employees
Food and Beverage Processors
General Population
Guardians
Health Educators
High-income Households
Homeowners
Human Resources Advisors
Individuals Nearing Retirement
Individuals Who Filed a Tax Return
Individuals with a Tax Free Savings Account
Internet Users
Landowners
Libraries
Low-income Canadians
Middle-income Canadians
Minority Communities
Newcomers
Non-profit Organizations
Nurses
Offenders
Parents
Parents and Guardians of Disabled Children
Partners, Clients and Stakeholders
Pregnant Women
Primary Shoppers
Producers
Recruits
Registered Apprentices
Retirees
Self-employed Canadians
Seniors
Subscribers to Federal Court Reports
Tradespersons
Visitors of Canada Web sites
Volunteers
Youth

Appendix IV: Standing Offers for Public Opinion Research, Effective April 1, 2010

The standing offers¹ for public opinion research were issued on April 1, 2010 and made available for use by departments for research projects with a contract value of up to \$200,000 (including HST). These standing offers were established competitively.

The standing offers were designed to:

- encourage the participation of all types of POR suppliers including small, medium and large businesses, joint ventures, and businesses specializing in target populations (including Aboriginal peoples and ethnocultural populations) from various geographic locations;
- ensure that the Government of Canada has access to a broad range of subject expertise and research specializations with various target groups in Canada (therefore no limits were placed on the number of firms that could submit a response to the Request for Standing Offer [RFSO]);
- react to a rapidly changing technological environment, allowing for the use of a variety of research methodologies (including online techniques); and
- include custom qualitative research, quantitative research and a blend of the two.

Standing offers are used in the direct selection of suppliers for projects not exceeding \$200,000 (HST included) in contract value. These contracting tools enable departments and agencies to obtain POR services in an efficient and effective manner with qualified research firms, at predetermined prices, terms and conditions.

¹ A standing offer is not a contract. A standing offer is an agreement with an individual supplier to provide goods and services at pre-arranged prices, under set terms and conditions, that is open for acceptance by one or more authorized user(s) on behalf of the Government of Canada during a specified period of time. A separate contract is formed each time a call-up for the provision of goods and/or services is made against a standing offer.

STANDING OFFER HOLDERS *	FIELDWORK & DATA TABULATION		ONLINE PRE-TESTING OF ADVERTS.	TARGET POPULATIONS								
	TELEPHONE	ONLINE		SERIES A: QUALITATIVE			SERIES B: QUANTITATIVE			SERIES C: QUAL/QUANT.		
				GENERAL	ABORIGINAL	ETHNO	GENERAL	ABORIGINAL	ETHNO	GENERAL	ABORIGINAL	ETHNO
Ascentum		•		•			•			•		
Bristol Group Inc.	•			•			•			•		
Campaign Research	•											
COMPAS Inc.				•		•						
Corbin Partners Inc.				•								
Corporate Research Associates Inc.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•		•
CROP INC.	•											
DataPath Systems							•					
Ekos Research Associates Inc.	•	•		•	•	•	•	•		•	•	
Environics Research Group	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Gadd Research Inc.			•									
Genesis Public Opinion Research Inc.				•			•			•		
Gregg, Kelly, Sullivan & Woolstencroft: The Strategic Counsel				•		•	•	•	•	•		•
Harris/Decima Inc.	•	•	•	•	•		•	•		•	•	
Holinshed Research Group Inc.	•	•					•					
HRSG				•								
Innovative Research Group Inc.	•								•			
Insightrix Research Inc.	•	•					•					
IPSOS-REID CORPORATION	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Jolicoeur & Associés	•											
Léger Marketing	•	•	•	•		•	•		•	•		•
MacPhie & Company Inc.				•								

* The company names listed in this appendix are their operating names as they appear in the Government of Canada standing offers.

STANDING OFFER HOLDERS *	FIELDWORK & DATA TABULATION		ONLINE PRE-TESTING OF ADVERTIS.	TARGET POPULATIONS									
	TELEPHONE	ONLINE		ONLINE	SERIES A: QUALITATIVE			SERIES B: QUANTITATIVE			SERIES C: QUAL/QUANT.		
					GENERAL	ABORIGINAL	ETHNO	GENERAL	ABORIGINAL	ETHNO	GENERAL	ABORIGINAL	ETHNO
Nanos Research Corporation	*	*		*			*				*		
NRG Research Group	*			*	*	*							
OpinionSearch Inc.	*	*											
Patterson, Langlois Consultants				*									
Phase 5			*	*			*				*		
Phoenix SPI	*	*		*	*	*	*	*			*	*	
Pollara		*		*			*				*		
Praxicus Public Strategies Inc.				*			*				*		
Probe Research Inc.				*	*								
Quorus Consulting Group Inc.				*			*				*		
Research Strategy Group Inc.				*	*	*	*				*		
Sage Research Corporation				*		*	*				*		
Saine Marketing Inc.		*					*						
SOM Inc.	*	*					*						
Sylvain Laroche, consultant, Inc.				*			*				*		
Synovate Ltd.			*				*						
The Logit Group Incorporated	*	*											
TNS CANADIAN FACTS INC.	*	*	*	*		*	*		*		*		*
torontoinsights.com	*	*											
Veraxis Research & Communications Inc.				*			*				*		
Vision Critical Communications Inc.		*	*	*		*	*		*		*		*
Walker Consulting Group				*			*	*			*		

* The company names listed in this appendix are their operating names as they appear in the Government of Canada standing offers.

Appendix V: Public Opinion Research Related Acts, Regulations, Policies and Procedures

Acts

- [*Financial Administration Act*](#): prohibits verbal-only public opinion research (POR) reporting.
- [*Library and Archives of Canada Act*](#): requires departments to provide written reports to Library and Archives Canada (LAC) within six months of completion of data collection.

Regulations

- [*Public Opinion Research Contract Regulations*](#): standardizes the form and content of contracted POR reports.

Policies

- [*Common Services Policy*](#): identifies Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) as a mandatory common service organization for the coordination and contracting of POR.
- *Treasury Board's* [*Communications Policy of the Government of Canada*](#): outlines mandatory requirements to ensure coherent, cost-effective management of public opinion research throughout the government.
- [*Contracting Policy*](#): requires departments to notify PWGSC when a POR project may require a contract.

Procedures

- [*Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research*](#): supports and facilitates implementation of the *Communications Policy of the Government of Canada*.
 - [*Policy Notice: Amendments to the Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research \(June 17, 2009\)*](#)



For More Information

This report provides an overview of public opinion research activities in the Government of Canada during the fiscal year 2010–2011.

If you have any comments or questions, please contact:

Public Opinion Research Directorate

Integrated Services Branch
Public Works and Government Services Canada
350 Albert Street, 5th Floor
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0S5

Telephone: 613-995-9837

Fax: 613-947-6696

E-mail:

DGSIOpinionPublique.ISBPublicOpinion@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca

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