





Public Opinion Research in the Government of Canada

ANNUAL REPORT 2011-2012









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Annual Report 2011-2012

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Introduction

This report provides an overview of government-wide¹ contracted public opinion research activities coordinated by Public Works and Government Services Canada on behalf of departments in the 2011-2012 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 cost².

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, economic growth, food safety, supporting veterans and elder abuse. POR uses reliable, impartial and systematic methods to collect opinions of a wide range of Canadians 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. Information gathered is used to better understand the needs and expectations of Canadians, and gives them a way to participate in the ongoing discussion between themselves and their government.

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 Public opinion research 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.

² See the *Communications Policy of the Government of Canada*, 2012, available online: http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=12316§ion=text#sec5.8.

A Year in Review

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

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

In 2011-2012, a total of 100 projects were conducted, of which 34 projects were conducted to understand how the Canadian population views government services and to measure how satisfied they are with the services provided; 27 projects were conducted to strengthen policies and develop communications initiatives that take into account Canadians' needs, and 39 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 Contracted Public Opinion Research

	Contract Value ³	Percentage of Contract Value	Number of Projects ³
Serving Canadians Better	\$2,683,961	41%	34
Taking into Account Canadians' Needs	\$2,061,329	32%	27
Informing Canadians	\$1,768,534	27%	39
Total:	\$6,513,824	100%	100

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:

• Quality of service and client satisfaction: This type of research helps the 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. This type of study also includes research supporting a more productive work environment.

³ The number of projects and contract values represent contractual transactions issued between April 1, 2011 and March 31, 2012 (including amendments to increase, cancel or reduce the value of the contracts issued from previous fiscal years).

Policy and program evaluation: Government uses research methods such as surveys and
focus groups to evaluate the effectiveness and usefulness of programs and services, and the
factors related to their utility.

As Table 1 shows, studies conducted to better serve Canadians accounted for 34 projects and 41 percent of the total contract value of POR for the 2011-2012 fiscal year. Studies in this category were used to help the government provide services to a diverse population.

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' views to help design and deliver programs, and identify the best approaches to reach out to Canadians. This includes:

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

As Table 1 shows, studies in the area of "Taking into Account Canadians' Needs" accounted for 27 projects and 32 percent of the total contract value of POR for the 2011-2012 fiscal year. Studies in this category were used by the government to help deliver policies and programs for Canadians.

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, concise and targeted to appropriate audiences. This includes:

- **Communication product testing:** This type of research includes the evaluation of concepts, messages, content and creative design.
- Advertising pre-testing: The Government of Canada pre-tests advertising associated with major campaigns to ensure that funds are invested wisely and that Canadians understand the

government's communications messages. Pre-testing is mandatory for campaigns with a media buy of \$400,000 or more⁴.

- Advertising post evaluation: Post evaluation of advertising is used to measure recall and recognition, as well as attitude and behaviour changes resulting from major campaigns. Post evaluation of advertising is mandatory for campaigns with a media buy of \$1 million or more⁵. The information from these studies is used to improve the planning and development of other information campaigns.
- 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.

As Table 1 shows, studies in the area "Informing Canadians" accounted for 39 projects and 27 percent of the total contract value of POR for the 2011-2012 fiscal year. Studies in this category were used to help keep Canadians informed about their government's policies, programs and services.

⁴ See the section entitled "Procedures for Planning, Contracting and Evaluating Advertising" in the *Communications Policy of the Government of Canada: Procedures*, 2008, available online: http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=12321§ion=text#cha6.

⁵ See the section entitled "Procedures for Planning, Contracting and Evaluating Advertising" in the *Communications Policy of the Government of Canada: Procedures*, 2008, available online: http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=12321§ion=text#cha6.

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 institutions 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
- Office of the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner of Canada.

Organizations with a Responsibility for Public Opinion Research

The <u>Communications Policy of the Government of Canada</u> assigns the following responsibilities to key bodies in POR:

Departments are at the centre of the overall process. They are responsible for the management of their POR activities as well as the research content and the overall quality of the research produced. Departments are also responsible for accepting all deliverables and for the payment of suppliers.

The **Privy** Council Office performs a central role in the leadership, challenge, strategic direction and coordination of departmental and horizontal POR activities.

The **Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat** provides advice and support to Treasury Board ministers and its President in the development, management and evaluation of administrative policy. Under the *Communications Policy of the Government of Canada*, the Secretariat is responsible for developing, evaluating and reviewing government-wide communications policy, which includes POR; advising institutions on policy interpretation and application; and monitoring policy implementation and compliance.

Library and Archives Canada ensures increased transparency by facilitating access to POR reports. LAC receives copies of final reports from departments within six months of the completion of POR fieldwork. The <u>LAC Web site</u> provides access to bilingual executive summaries and final reports from research contracted after August 1, 2006. The **Library of Parliament** makes the reports available to members of Parliament and the media.

Public Works and Government Services Canada works with other federal organizations to serve Canadians efficiently and cost-effectively. The department serves as coordinating, technical and contracting authority for POR within the government. PWGSC exercises this authority through two of its directorates, the Public Opinion Research Directorate and the Communication Procurement Directorate, which collaborate to provide seamless services to federal organizations.

- The Communication Procurement Directorate provides a mandatory common service as the government's contracting authority for public opinion research. The directorate manages the procurement process for all departmental public opinion research requirements in accordance with Government of Canada policies; awards and manages contracts; and, where applicable, chairs and conducts open, fair and transparent bid evaluation processes.
- The Public Opinion Research Directorate provides a mandatory common service as the technical and coordinating authority of POR activities. The directorate facilitates studies by guiding client departments through the entire process. PORD advises institutions on research methodologies, standards, policy requirements and research instruments (e.g. questionnaires and discussion guides), and assigns project registration numbers. This helps ensure that research objectives are met and that the research undertaken conforms with legislative and policy requirements as well as Government of Canada and accepted industry standards. The directorate also contributes to government-wide capacity building by delivering information sessions; developing best practices and tools and promoting training opportunities to departments related to the conduct of government public opinion research.

Appendices

Appendix I

Public Opinion Research in the Government of Canada: Trends in Contract Values and Number of Projects

Fiscal Year	Contract Value ¹	Number of Projects ¹
2011-2012	\$6,513,824	100
2010-2011	\$7,902,871	136
2009-2010	\$8,305,795	148
2008-2009	\$8,103,886	131

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

Appendix II

Listing of Departments Engaged in Public Opinion Research in 2011-2012

Government Institution	Contract Value ¹	Number of Projects ¹
Health Canada ²	\$772,463.64	14
Canada Revenue Agency	\$674,181.82	10
National Defence	\$669,405.22	7
Human Resources and Skills Development Canada	\$567,668.69	7
Natural Resources Canada	\$490,992.69	4
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada	\$417,281.04	5
Veterans Affairs Canada	\$411,171.15	6
Department of Finance Canada	\$348,242.67	5
Citizenship and Immigration Canada ³	\$310,358.80	6
Privy Council Office	\$249,743.00	2
Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada	\$241,118.26	3
Canadian Heritage	\$227,825.30	6
Parks Canada	\$185,912.69	1
Public Works and Government Services Canada	\$150,363.45	2
Canadian Food Inspection Agency	\$147,949.77	4
Royal Canadian Mounted Police	\$122,487.31	2
Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions	\$108,478.88	3
Environment Canada	\$76,348.45	1
Financial Consumer Agency of Canada	\$73,194.62	2
Canadian Transportation Agency	\$60,115.44	2
Library and Archives Canada	\$34,965.59	1
Canadian International Trade Tribunal	\$31,866.57	1
Transportation Safety Board of Canada	\$30,990.25	1
National Film Board of Canada	\$27,447.70	1
Statistics Canada	\$26,512.00	1
Public Safety Canada ⁴	\$21,953.08	1
Public Service Labour Relations Board	\$17,876.60	1
National Research Council of Canada	\$16,909.32	1
Total:	\$6,513,824.00	100

¹ The number of projects and contract values represent contractual transactions issued between April 1, 2011 and March 31, 2012 (including amendments to increase, cancel or reduce the value of the contracts issued from previous fiscal years).

² Includes contracts issued under Public Health Agency of Canada. Contract value includes projects undertaken through task authorization contracts in the 2011-2012 fiscal year.

³ A contract in the amount of \$39,144.33 was cancelled without any expenditures being incurred. As the cancellation took place in the 2012-2013 fiscal year, the cancellation will be reported in that year.

⁴ Includes a contract issued under the former name of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada.

Appendix III

Listing of Contractors Engaged in Public Opinion Research in 2011-2012

A total of 21 contractors were involved in POR during 2011-2012.

Supplier	Contract Value ¹	Number of projects ¹
Ipsos-Reid Corporation	\$1,466,704.21	16
Harris/Decima Inc.	\$1,071,657.33	14
Phoenix SPI	\$520,485.58	8
Environics Research Group	\$490,706.00	8
Ekos Research Associates Inc.	\$477,986.62	12
TNS Canadian Facts Inc.	\$407,143.43	8
NRG Research Group	\$308,604.24	3
Walker Consulting Group	\$282,536.15	2
Gregg, Kelly, Sullivan & Woolstencroft: The Strategic Counsel	\$272,585.18	4
Corporate Research Associates Inc.	\$257,432.08	5
The Royal Canadian Legion	\$220,000.01	1
Phase 5	\$210,715.00	4
Léger Marketing	\$162,444.28	4
Nanos Research Corporation	\$150,256.11	3
Sage Research Corporation	\$122,207.24	2
Quorus Consulting Group Inc.	\$61,618.90	1
Opinion Search Inc.	\$21,424.80	1
Vision Critical Communications Inc.	\$16,909.32	1
University of Waterloo	\$14,999.62	1
Holinshed Research Group Inc.	\$-2,644.20 ²	1
Angus Reid Strategies	\$-19,947.90 ²	1
Total:	\$6,513,824.00	100

¹ The number of projects and contract values represent contractual transactions issued between April 1, 2011 and March 31, 2012 (including amendments to increase, cancel or reduce the value of the contracts issued from previous fiscal years).

⁽including amendments to increase, cancel or reduce the value of the contracts issued from previous fiscal years).

² In 2011-2012, a contract was amended to reduce the contract value of an existing project issued in a previous fiscal year. The result was a net decrease. No POR project was contracted in 2011-2012 with this supplier.

Appendix IV

Population Segments Reached through Public Opinion Research in 2011-2012

POR undertaken by the Government of Canada reaches a wide range of Canadians, including the general public, users of government services, and those in particular segments of the population presented in this table. The table presents 36 specific target groups reached by POR studies conducted in 2011-2012.

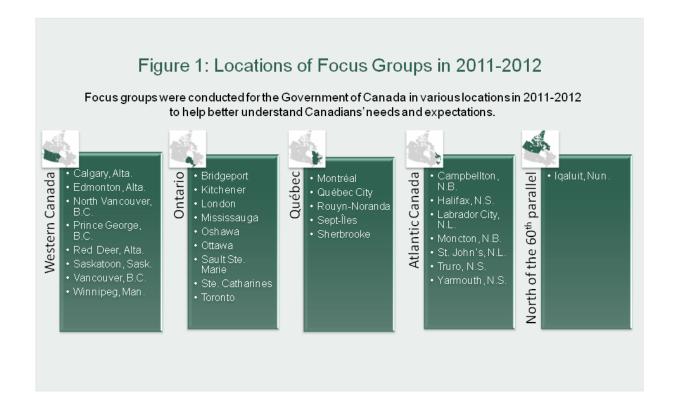
Aboriginal people
Agricultural producers
Businesses
Citizenship applicants
Community interveners
Consumers and buyers
Contractors
Educational advisors
Employees
Employers
Ethnic Canadians
Farm leaders
First Nations people living on reserve
Front-line professionals
Government of Canada clients
Guardians and caregivers
Immigrants
Inuits

Law enforcement agencies
Legal counsel and witnesses
Low and medium income Canadians
People with lower levels of education
Newcomers
Parents
People with disabilities
People with weakened immune systems
Pregnant women
Post-secondary students
Seniors
Smokers
Stakeholders in the wood industry
Tax practitioners
Veterans
Visible minorities
Women
Youth

Appendix V

Locations of Focus Groups in **Public Opinion Research in 2011-2012**

Figure 1 shows the areas where focus groups were conducted for the Government of Canada in 2011-2012.



Appendix VI

Standing Offers for Public Opinion Research

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 are in place for the period from April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2013 with a possibility of two extensions of one year each.

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 to obtain POR services in an efficient and effective manner with qualified research firms, at predetermined prices, terms and conditions.

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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.

Firms on the Government of Canada's Standing Offers for Public Opinion Research

	FIELDWORK & DATA TABULATION		ONLINEPRE- TESTINGOF ADVERTIS.	TARGET POPULATIONS									
				SERII	ES A: QUALIT	ATIVE	SERIE	S B: QUANTIT	TATIVE	SERIE	S C: QUAL./Q	UANT.	
STANDING OFFER HOLDERS *	TELEPHONE	ONLINE	ONLINE	GENERAL	ABORIGINAL	ETHNO	GENERAL	ABORIGINAL	ETHNO	GENERAL	ABORIGINAL	ETHNO	
Ascentum													
Bristol Group Inc.													
Campaign Research	٠.												
COMPAS Inc.													
Corbin Partners Inc.													
Corporate Research Associates Inc.													
CROP INC.													
DataPath Systems													
Ekos Research Associates Inc.	•							٠					
Environics Research Group	•			٠	٠	٠	٠		٠			٠	
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	7.0												
Jolicoeur & Associés	•												
Léger Marketing													

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

Firms on the Government of Canada's Standing Offers for Public Opinion Research (continued)

STANDING OFFER HOLDERS * TI	& D	FIELDWORK & DATA TABULATION		TARGET POPULATIONS									
				SERI	SERIES A: QUALITATIVE SERIES B: QUANTITATIVE SERIES C: QUAL								
	TELEPHONE	ONLINE	ONLINE	GENERAL	ABORIGINAL	ETHNO	GENERAL	ABORIGINAL	ETHNO	GENERAL	ABORIGINAL	ETHNO	
Nanos Research Corporation													
NRG Research Group													
Opinion Search Inc.													
Patterson, Langlois Consultants													
Phase 5				٠									
Phoenix SPI													
Pollara													
Praxicus Public Strategies Inc.													
Probe Research Inc.													
Quorus Consulting Group Inc.													
Research Strategy Group Inc.													
Sage Research Corporation													
Saine MarketingInc.													
SOM Inc.	٠	٠											
Sylvain Laroche, consultant, Inc.													
Synovate Ltd.													
The Logit Group Incorporated													
TNS CANADIAN FACTS INC.												٠	
torontoinsights.com													
Veraxis Research & Communications Inc													
Vision Critical Communications									٠			٠	

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

Appendix VII

Public Opinion Research Related Acts, Regulations, Policies and Procedures

Acts

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

Regulations

• <u>Public Opinion Research Contract Regulations</u>: standardizes the form and content of contracted POR reports.

Policies

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

Procedures

- <u>Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research</u>: 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 2011-2012.

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:

 $\underline{DGSIOpinionPublique.ISBPublicOpinion@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca}$

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