

Executive Summary – Public Opinion Research Study on Electoral Matters - Wave 3

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Prepared for Elections Canada

Supplier: Léger Marketing Inc.

Contract Number: 05005-221079/001/CY

Contract Value: \$81,622.16 (including HST)

Award Date: 2022-02-24

Delivery Date: 2023-03-31

Registration Number: POR 127-21

For more information on this report, please contact Elections Canada at rop-por@elections.ca.

Léger is pleased to present Elections Canada with this report on findings from the third wave of the tracking quantitative survey designed to learn about Canadians who are eligible electors residing in different regions in Canada. This report was prepared by Léger Marketing Inc. who was contracted by Elections Canada (contract number 05005-221079/001/CY awarded February 24, 2022).

Background and objectives

As per its mandate, Elections Canada (EC) must always be ready to organize elections, even in exceptional circumstances such as in the event of a natural disaster or emergency.

In this context, Elections Canada wanted to gauge the general public's opinion on various electoral issues and topics at different points in time between elections.

This report presents the results of the third wave of the survey conducted on electoral matters with 2,505 Canadians between March 1 and 7, 2023. The first wave of this study was conducted in April 2021¹ and serves as the baseline for measuring and identifying significant trends or changes in the opinions and attitudes of Canadian electors across up to a total of five survey waves that may be conducted over the course of this study through to 2023–24. The second wave was conducted in April 2022.²

The project aims, among others, to improve understanding of Canadian electors':

- a. opinions on emerging issues that pertain to the administration of elections
- b. trust in electoral administration and other national institutions
- c. sources of information about elections and the electoral process

More specifically, EC wants to track any significant fluctuation in these measures over time. Other questions are asked to help the agency better understand what other internal or external factors may inform or impact electors' views on trust in electoral administration more generally.

Intended use of the research

The information provided in these research reports will be used to inform EC's strategic communications and the development of EC's policies, programs, and services.

Future waves of the survey will be used to track these measures over time.

Methodology

This public opinion research was conducted via online surveys, using Computer Aided Web Interviewing (CAWI) technology. Fieldwork for the wave three survey was carried out from March 1–7, 2023. A total of 2,505 eligible Canadian electors (citizens at least 18 years of age at the time of the survey) with demographic characteristics reflective of the Canadian population were surveyed. The sample was drawn randomly from the Leo panel and the overall response rate for the survey was 12.4%.

The questionnaire comprised primarily questions posed in the wave two survey conducted in April and May 2022, with some questions being added or removed to account for changing research needs between waves.

Using data from the most recent Canadian census, results were weighted within each region by gender and age to ensure the best possible representativeness of the sample within each region and overall. The weight of each region was adjusted to be equivalent to its actual weight in relation to the distribution of the Canadian population. The weighting factors are presented in detail in Appendix A of this report.

A pre-test of 89 interviews was completed before launching data collection to validate the programming of the questionnaire in both English and French.

Léger adheres to the most stringent guidelines for quantitative research. This survey was conducted in accordance with the Standards of Conduct of Government of Canada Public Opinion Research for online surveys.

A complete methodological description is provided in the Appendices section of this document (please see [Appendix A](#)).

Overview of the findings

- The top news sources remain unchanged from April 2022 to March 2023: television comes out first (32%), followed by online news websites or apps (26%) and social media posts by news organizations or journalists (16%).
- A vast majority (81%) of electors said they see news about Canadian politics very or somewhat often; one in 10 (11%) respondents said they rarely see news about politics from any origin.
- In March 2023, Elections Canada came second to the police in terms of electors' confidence in institutions, with seven out of 10 (70%) having a fair amount or a great deal of confidence in EC, compared with 72% for the police. In previous surveys, confidence in EC was slightly higher than in the police; but confidence in EC has dropped by four points since April 2022 (74%) and by eight points since April 2021 (78%). However, confidence in EC remains higher than confidence in all other measured institutions, including the federal (53%) and provincial (52%) governments.
- While a large majority (78%) of electors in March 2023 generally believe that Elections Canada runs federal elections fairly, this proportion has gone down significantly from 81% in April 2022, continuing a slow decrease observed since April 2021.
- Reasons for thinking Elections Canada runs election unfairly remain somewhat similar to April 2022, with some key differences. Concerns about electoral integrity and security (18%) and a regional distribution of seats that is perceived to be unfair (8%) remain the top two reasons, followed by concerns about foreign/Chinese influence/interference (7%), which is a new finding in March 2023. However, concerns about electoral integrity and security have increased significantly since April 2022 (18% from 11%), while the unfair regional distribution of seats has been mentioned significantly less (8% from 16%).
- Nearly three-quarters (73%) of electors agreed that if Elections Canada proposes changes to how federal elections are run, it is probably to make voting easier or fairer for all Canadians; nearly two-thirds (65%) agreed that the government more generally would propose changes for the same reason. These results have remained stable since April 2022.
- The spread of false information online is still perceived by a large proportion of electors (76%) as the type of electoral interference that is capable of having a moderate or major impact on the outcome of the next federal election, consistent with April 2022 results (77%). The perceived impacts of other types of electoral interference similarly remained unchanged between April 2022 and March 2023: the second-largest proportion of electors thought that there could be an impact from foreign money being used to influence politics in Canada (66%), closely followed by foreign countries or groups using social media and other means to influence the political opinions of Canadians (65%) and hacking by foreign countries or groups into the computer systems that support the election (62%).
- Voting by mail in Canada is still perceived to be less safe and reliable compared with the voting system in general (42% compared with 61%). Both voting in general and voting by mail are perceived as safe and reliable by smaller proportions of electors in March 2023 compared to April 2022. Conversely, notable proportions of respondents agreed that the voting system in general is prone to fraud (27% versus 21% in

April 2022) and that voting by mail is prone to fraud (41% versus 35% in April 2022), continuing the trends observed since April 2021.

- Similar to April 2022, the largest proportion (42%) of electors in March 2023 thought that someone impersonating someone else is a type of voter fraud that happens often or sometimes in Canadian federal elections, followed by someone voting who is not a Canadian citizen (36%). Around three out of 10 electors also agreed that someone voting more than once (33%) and someone stealing or tampering with ballots after they have been cast (29%) happens often or sometimes. Results have remained stable since April 2022.
- Two-thirds (65%) of respondents agreed that they did not think the government cares about what people like them think, around half (51%) agreed that politics and government seem so complicated that people like them cannot understand, and four in 10 (40%) agreed that all federal political parties are basically the same and do not really offer a choice. While results for the first two statements remained stable between March 2023 and April 2022, a lower proportion of electors believed that all federal political parties are basically the same (40% compared to 43% in April 2022).
- Almost half (48%) of electors do not feel polarized in how they relate to other Canadians: they do not find it easier to relate to those they agree with politically and do not find it harder to relate to those with whom they disagree. On the other hand, 14% of electors feel strongly polarized, meaning they find it easier to relate to those they agree with politically to a moderate or large extent while also agreeing that it is harder for them to relate to those with whom they disagree. Over a third (38%) feel somewhat polarized, falling in the middle of the two groups. Overall, respondents' feelings of being polarized were based more often on an affinity toward those they agreed with politically rather than an aversion to those with whom they disagreed: 49% of respondents agreed to a moderate or large extent that they find it easier to relate to people if they agree with them politically; 38% agreed that they find it harder to relate to people if they disagree with them politically.
- The proportions of people in March 2023 who accept various broad conspiracy theories about government to be true has not changed since April 2022, although the proportion of those who thought it is definitely false that the government is trying to cover up the link between vaccines and autism decreased significantly (45% from 50%). The most accepted theory remained that certain significant events have been the result of the activity of a small group who secretly manipulate world events, with four in 10 (42%) accepting it as definitely or probably true (similar to 41% in April 2022).

Notes on interpretation of the research findings

The views and observations expressed in this document do not reflect those of Elections Canada. This report was compiled by Léger based on the research conducted specifically for this project. This research is not probabilistic; the results cannot be inferred to the general population of Canada.

Since a sample drawn from an Internet panel is not probabilistic in nature, margins of sampling error cannot be calculated for this survey. Respondents for this survey were selected among those who have volunteered to participate/registered to participate in online surveys. The results

of such surveys cannot be described as statistically projectable to the target population. The data have been weighted to reflect the demographic composition of the target population.

The results of this survey cannot be compared with the results of other Elections Canada surveys of electors conducted during the federal general election held on September 20, 2021, due to differences in the research designs and methodologies.

In this report, all results are expressed as percentages unless otherwise noted. Percentages may not always add up to 100% due to rounding or multiple mentions. Comparisons with results from the previous survey wave are presented when possible. For graphs, the reported bases represent the base of respondents from the most recent survey wave (March 2023 for this report).

Subgroup differences are reported when they are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Subgroup differences are reported only for the most recent survey wave. When a subgroup is reported as being more or less likely to have given a particular response, this means the result for the subgroup was significantly different compared with the combined result for all other subgroups combined. For example, if respondents aged 18 to 24 were more likely to give a particular response, it is in comparison to the result for all other respondents aged 25 and older. Please note that the use of the words "significant" and "significantly" throughout the report refer to statistical significance rather than magnitude. Finally, unless otherwise signalled, respondents to this survey will be referred to as electors.

Political neutrality statement and contact information

Léger certifies that the final deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada's political neutrality requirements outlined in the Policy on Communications and Federal Identity and the Directive on the Management of Communications.

Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.

Signed:



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Léger

Footnotes

¹ See: [Public Opinion Research Study on Electoral Matters - Wave 1 – Elections Canada](#).

² See: [Public Opinion Research Study on Electoral Matters - Wave 2 – Elections Canada](#).

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