



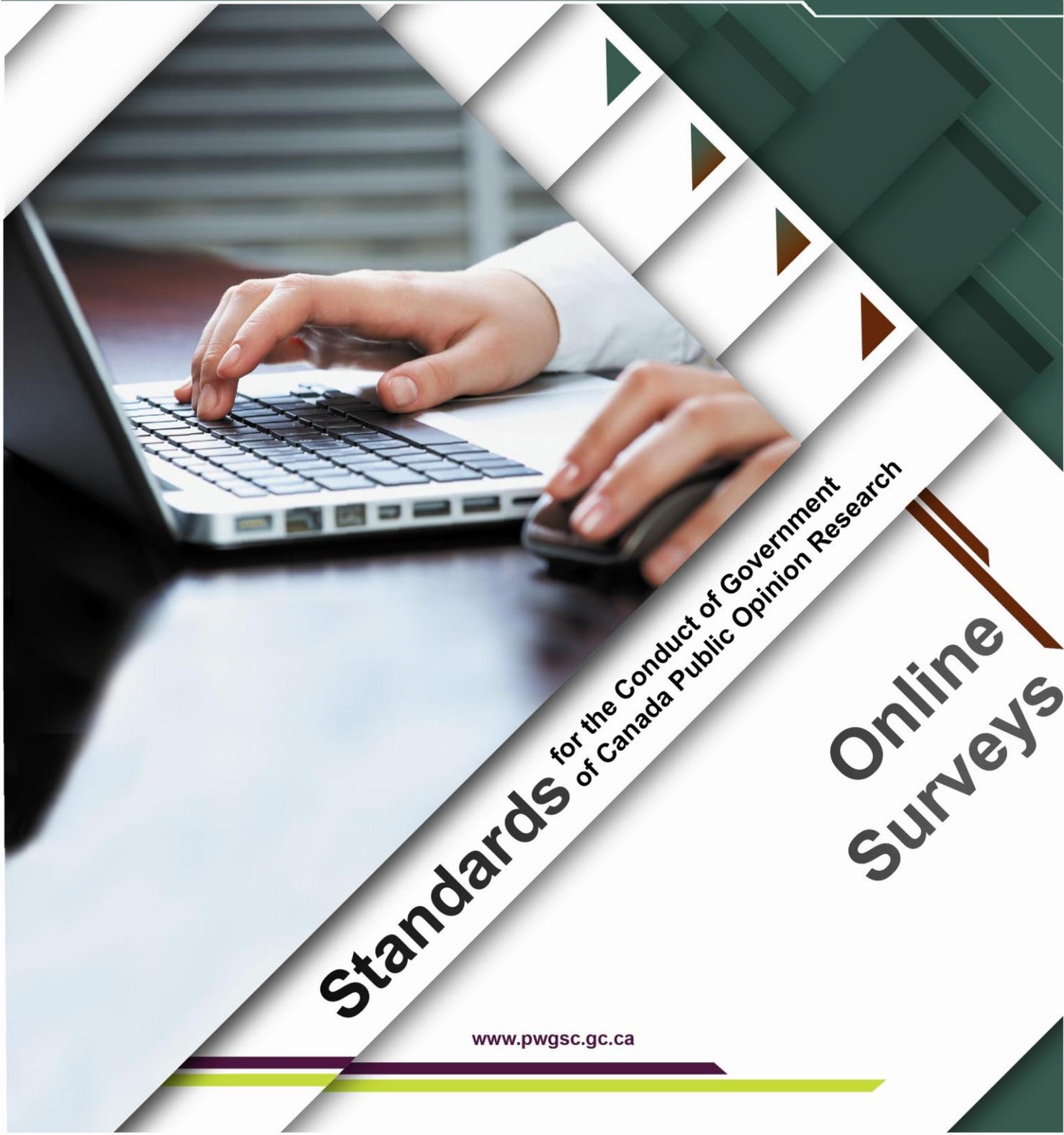
Public Works and
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Canada

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Standards for the Conduct of Government
of Canada Public Opinion Research

**Online
Surveys**

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Standards for the Conduct of Government of Canada Public Opinion Research

**Online Surveys
2013**

Prepared by Public Works and Government Services Canada

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IMPORTANT NOTES

The following standards are for custom online public opinion research surveys conducted for the Government of Canada (see endnote [S0N1](#)). If you have any questions related to this document please contact the Public Opinion Research Directorate at Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) by email at DGSIOPinionPublique.ISBPublicOpinion@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca or by telephone at 613-995-9837.

A. APPLICABILITY OF THESE STANDARDS

These standards apply to custom online public opinion research surveys conducted for the Government of Canada by contracted third parties, including questions added to omnibus/syndicated surveys. Custom studies are those in which ownership of the data rests with Canada. The standards do not apply to syndicated studies (those in which ownership of the data rests with the researcher) unless the Government of Canada contracts to place questions in addition to those already included in those studies. They also do not apply to surveys undertaken directly by departments within the Government of Canada itself. Nonetheless, PWGSC invites all individuals to view these standards as a resource in support of the planning and execution of their internal survey research projects.

To ensure that these standards are a primary consideration for researchers as they develop survey proposals, we recommend the following statement be included in all survey-related Statements of Work and Requests for Proposals issued by the Government of Canada:

The Standards for the Conduct of Government of Canada Public Opinion Research must be respected and applied in whole to all aspects of the conduct of the research. The project authority must be informed should the firm determine that certain elements of the standards cannot be accommodated in the course of the contract. Justification must be provided and permission received from the project authority in writing in these instances.

These standards are to be understood as in addition to relevant laws, regulations, and policies, e.g., the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act*, the *Privacy Act*, the *Federal Accountability Act*, and the *Communications Policy of the Government of Canada*.

B. APPLICABILITY OF OTHER STANDARDS

Where no relevant Government of Canada Standards exist, researchers must meet or exceed industry standards including those of the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association (MRIA).

C. EXCEPTIONS

These standards were developed with “typical” studies in mind. It is recognized, however, that public opinion research surveys have individual characteristics, which can sometimes clash with a “one size fits all” approach. Therefore, while departments and agencies are generally encouraged to apply the standards, they can also choose to waive a standard when they believe the characteristics of a study warrant it.

This document notes some of the more common instances in which it would be appropriate to waive or modify standards.

As departments and agencies are responsible for the quality of the research they undertake, no related procedure is required. In keeping with due diligence however, they must discuss the intention to waive standards with the Public Opinion Research Directorate. They must also consider specifying which standard is being waived and the related rationale in Statements of Work and other documents such as researcher proposals and final reports.

D. FOUR-YEAR REVIEW

The following standards have been developed to help ensure uniform high quality in public opinion research surveys conducted for the Government of Canada. It is recognized that changing technologies and other factors may necessitate their revision over time. As such, the intention is to review the standards every four years.

1. PROPOSAL DOCUMENTATION

Public Opinion Research contracts are based on the accepted final supplier proposal; therefore it is important that the proposal include sufficient detail to ensure that all requirements are clearly documented.

1.1. Introduction

1.1.1. Purpose

- 1) Describe the researcher's understanding of the problem/issues to be investigated and how the Government of Canada will use this information.

1.1.2. Research Objectives

- 1) Detail the information needs/research questions the research will address.

1.2. Technical Specifications of the Research

1.2.1. Overview

- 1) Provide a brief statement summarizing:
 - a) data collection method, including the method(s) used to obtain a sample (probability survey, non-probability survey or census) and rationale for proposed methodology;
 - b) expected final sample size;
 - c) target population.
- 2) The researcher must recommend a research design that they believe is cost efficient, will produce quality results, and is appropriate to meet the objectives of the research. The researcher must also provide a rationale for their recommendations.

If the researcher's design is the same as that described in the Statement of Work the researcher must state that they believe the design in the Statement of Work is cost efficient, will produce quality results, and is appropriate to meet the objectives of the research.

- 3) The researcher must state that the survey will be registered with the Research Registration System maintained by the [MRIA](#) and commit to informing the client when the registration has been completed.
- 4) The researcher must identify the individual(s) who will have supervising authority and accountability for the project. The proposal must state that these individual(s) will only be replaced in consultation with the client and following written agreement from PWGSC.
- 5) The researcher must identify all subcontractors used for field work and/or data collection.
- 6) The researcher must state that survey data will be stored on servers and back-up servers located solely in Canada (as specified in detail in [subsection 13.2.](#)).

- 7) The researcher must state that a signed statement of political neutrality will be submitted as part of the final research report.
- 8) The researcher must agree that the executive summary and report may be posted on the Library and Archives Canada (LAC) Web site or on any other Government of Canada Web sites.

1.2.2. Sample/Sampling Details

- 1) Provide details related to target population:
 - a) the definition of the target population in terms of its specific characteristics and geographic scope, including the assumed incidence of the population and any key sub-groups and how the incidence was determined/obtained (e.g., supplied by the client);
 - b) the total sample size and the sample sizes of any key sub-groups.
- 2) Describe the sampling procedures, including:
 - a) the sample source;
 - b) the sample frame;
 - c) whether a sample survey or a census will be conducted and, if a sample, whether probability or non-probability sampling will be applied (see [section 4.](#)).
- 3) Explain respondent selection procedures.
- 4) Indicate the number of re-contact attempts and explain re-contact attempt procedures.
- 5) Define respondent eligibility/screening criteria, including any quota controls.
- 6) For non-probability samples, provide rationale for choosing a non-probability sample.

1.2.3. Response Rate/Participation Rate and Error Rate

- 1) State the target response rate/participation rate for the sample(s). State the expected response rate/participation rate for each mode when more than one mode is proposed (i.e. separately for online and telephone components). Similarly, if a component of the research will recruit respondents via their cell phones, the expected response rate/participation rate for that component must be stated separately as well. The expected response rate/participation rate is an estimation based on various factors such as previous response rates/participation rates, trends etc. The proposal must include a brief discussion of the factors that might cause the actual response/participation rate to fall short of the stated target.
- 2) For probability samples, state the level of precision, including the margin of sampling error and confidence interval for the sample(s). (See [subsection 4.2.](#) for detailed requirements related to margin of sampling error.)
- 3) Describe specific procedures that will be applied to eliminate or minimize the impact of any sampling or non-sampling errors, including non-response bias, on the research findings.

1.2.4. Description of Data Collection

- 1) State the method of data collection.
- 2) Provide details on respondents' incentives/honoraria where applicable, including rationale.

- 3) For access panels, a description of the following must be provided, at minimum (when multiple panels are used, the information must be provided for each):
 - a) active panel size (provide the definition of “active”);
 - b) panel recruitment;
 - c) panel monitoring;
 - d) panel maintenance;
 - e) panel refreshment.
- 4) Describe how language requirements will be addressed, if other than English and French.
- 5) Describe the planned fieldwork validation methods and procedures.
- 6) Describe how the rights of children, youth and vulnerable respondents will be respected, if applicable (see [section 6.](#)).
- 7) For multi-mode surveys, provide a rationale for using a multi-mode rather than a single-mode method. When it is proposed to recruit at least some respondents via their cell phones, provide a rationale for using this approach in addition to or in place of landline phones.
- 8) To be a respondent to a Government of Canada survey, panel members may not have participated in any Government of Canada survey as a member of that panel or a survey on similar subject matter by any medium in the previous 30 days. An exception would be when a study’s research design requires a follow-up survey with respondents and the respondent has agreed at the time of the initial survey to be re-contacted for that purpose.

1.2.5. Questionnaire Design

- 1) Provide the approximate duration of the questionnaire in minutes.
- 2) Specify the maximum number of open-ends.
- 3) Describe how the questionnaire will be pre-tested, including:
 - a) the objectives of the pre-test;
 - b) the method for the pre-test;
 - c) the total number of pre-test questionnaires to be completed;
 - d) when questionnaire effectiveness with specific sub-groups is of concern (e.g., due to language, age, level of education, etc.), the number in each such subgroup to be included in the pre-test;
 - e) how the results of the pre-test will be documented and communicated to the client.

Note: If no pre-test is to be conducted, a rationale must be provided.

1.2.6. Description of Data Processing/Data Management

- 1) Where known in advance, describe any weighting required.

1.2.7. Data Analysis

- 1) Briefly describe how the data will be analyzed in order to address the objectives/research questions, including any special analyses (e.g., segmentation).

1.2.8. Deliverables

- 1) List all deliverables including their scope, format, means of delivery and number of copies, including at minimum:
 - a) questionnaire(s), including pre-test, if relevant;
 - b) data tabulation/processing;
 - c) the report format(s), including the number of copies, language of report;
 - d) the nature, location and number of presentations, including the language of presentations.

1.2.9. Project Schedule

- 1) Provide a detailed work plan with dates and identify responsibilities.

1.2.10. Project Cost

- 1) Cost information must be presented in the format designated by PWGSC.

2. QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

2.1. Standards

- 1) Survey questionnaires must be designed:
 - a) to collect only the information essential to the objectives of the study;
 - b) to minimize the burden placed on respondents while maximizing data quality; and
 - c) to be completed in a maximum duration of 20 minutes, not including pauses or interruptions. Exceptions could include projects with specialized audiences and those with pre-arranged interviews when the respondent is aware the survey will take longer than 20 minutes. **Average questionnaire durations of 15 minutes or less are strongly encouraged in order to minimize respondent burden.**
- 2) The following are required elements of all Government of Canada online survey questionnaire introductions:
 - a) follow the *Official Languages Act* and Policies; in particular, introductions must include an active offer of both official languages (English and French); the language that appears first in the text will depend on the province in which the respondent resides (e.g., French for Quebec, English for the rest of Canada) or on the respondent's official language of preference when this information is available (e.g., in sample lists). The respondent must be able to easily select the other official language, for example by clicking on a clearly-labelled link;
 - b) identify the Government of Canada or the department/agency sponsoring the survey;
 - c) inform respondents of the general subject and purpose of the study. The subject and purpose of the study may be expressed in very general terms so long as these terms cannot be construed as an attempt to misinform respondents. When the researcher makes a convincing case that the subject and purpose of the survey is such that stating it at the outset will affect respondents' willingness to participate, stating them may be deferred to the conclusion of the study;

- d) inform respondents of the expected length of the survey;
- e) identify the researcher;
- f) inform respondents that their participation in the study is voluntary and completely confidential;
- g) inform respondents that their responses remain anonymous. In the exceptional cases where the research objectives require that respondent identity be revealed, the informed consent of the respondent must be obtained;
- h) inform respondents that the survey is registered with the Research Registration System maintained by the MRIA, and provide a link to that service such that the registration status of the survey can be readily verified.

Examples of exceptions: The sponsor would not be mentioned until the end of the survey in particular cases; other languages would be mentioned when the survey is available in non-official languages; and information about the availability of reports could be provided to specialized respondents when the incentive to participate outweighs the additional length of the introduction.

In addition to any other material used to communicate with respondents (e.g., invitations), the following introduction **could** be used for online questionnaires:

The Government of Canada is conducting this research survey on **SUBJECT. NAME OF FIRM** has been hired to administer the survey. Si vous préférez répondre au sondage en français, veuillez cliquer sur FRANÇAIS [DIRECT THE RESPONDENT TO THE FRENCH LANGUAGE VERSION]. The survey takes about ## minutes to complete and is voluntary and completely confidential. Your answers will remain anonymous. The survey is registered with the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association. Click here if you wish to verify its authenticity. To view our privacy policy, click here.

- 3) The standard set of demographic questions provided below must be included in all online surveys of the general Canadian population, unless a convincing argument is made that the research objectives are **better** served by excluding one or more of them.

In the case of business-to-business research, these standard demographic questions must be included whenever the unit of analysis is the individual rather than the organization. For example, if a survey's objective is to characterize the management styles of Canadian manufacturing executives, the individual (an executive) is the unit of analysis, and the standard set of demographic questions must be included. If, on the other hand, the research objective is to measure the hiring intentions of Canadian manufacturers, the organization (a Canadian manufacturer) is the unit of analysis, and the standard set of demographic questions need not be included.

The wording used for each question must be that provided below, unless a convincing argument is made that particular research objectives require alternative wording. Even in these exceptional cases, the terms used and/or categories applied (e.g., for household income) to capture responses must be those provided below.

The data from the age, education, and language questions (along with the recording of geographic location and sex) allows comparison with Statistics Canada census data for the purpose of non-response analysis. The data, along with that from the

employment status and income questions, also facilitate the comparison of results between Government of Canada public opinion research studies. (See [section 8.](#) for further detail on non-response bias.)

This does not preclude the use of additional demographic questions.

Gender

- What is your gender?
- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to answer

Age

In what year were you born?
_____ [YYYY]

Prefer not to answer

[IF PREFERS NOT TO PROVIDE A PRECISE BIRTH YEAR, ASK:]

Would you be willing to indicate in which of the following age categories you belong?

- 18 to 34
- 35 to 49
- 50 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65 or older
- Prefer not to answer

Education

What is the highest level of formal education that you have completed?

- Grade 8 or less
- Some high school
- High School diploma or equivalent
- Registered Apprenticeship or other trades certificate or diploma
- College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma
- University certificate or diploma below bachelor's level
- Bachelor's degree
- Post graduate degree above bachelor's level
- Prefer not to answer

Mother Tongue

What is the language you first learned at home as a child and still understand? [ACCEPT ALL THAT APPLY]

- English
- French
- Other [SPECIFY OR DO NOT SPECIFY DEPENDING ON THE NEEDS OF THE STUDY]
- Prefer not to answer

and/or

Language Spoken at Home

What language do you speak most often at home? [ACCEPT ALL THAT APPLY]

English

French

Other [SPECIFY OR DO NOT SPECIFY DEPENDING ON THE NEEDS OF THE STUDY]

Prefer not to answer

Employment Status

Which of the following categories best describes your current employment status? Are you... [ACCEPT ONE ANSWER ONLY]

Working full-time, that is, 35 or more hours per week?

Working part-time, that is, less than 35 hours per week?

Self-employed?

Unemployed, but looking for work?

A student attending school full-time?

Retired?

Not in the workforce? [FULL-TIME HOMEMAKER, UNEMPLOYED, NOT LOOKING FOR WORK]

Other – [DO NOT SPECIFY]

Prefer not to answer

Household Income

Which of the following categories best describes your total household income? That is, the total income of all persons in your household combined, before taxes?

Under \$20,000

\$20,000 to just under \$40,000

\$40,000 to just under \$60,000

\$60,000 to just under \$80,000

\$80,000 to just under \$100,000

\$100,000 to just under \$150,000

\$150,000 and above

Prefer not to answer

3. PRE-TESTING

3.1. Standards

- 1) Pre-testing of all components of a new or revised survey questionnaire that may influence data quality and respondent behaviour is required. This includes the online appearance and functionality of the questionnaire.
- 2) The client must be given the opportunity to test and approve the online survey prior to launch.
- 3) Pre-testing must include probing that invites participants recruited for this purpose to provide input about their comprehension of and reaction to the questions. For example, a short series of questions could be included at the end of the pre-test survey. Researchers and clients must agree in advance as to whether probing will take place during or after administering the survey. If requested by the client a cognitive pre-test must be conducted.

- 4) To help ensure questionnaire effectiveness with subgroups where there is reason for concern (e.g., due to language, age, level of education, etc.), the socio-demographic characteristics of the targeted participants must be approved by the client before recruiting begins.
- 5) A minimum of 10 pre-test surveys are to be completed in each language in which the final survey will be fielded. An exception could be projects with small survey populations, such as a client-satisfaction survey of a small client base. In such cases the researcher must, in consultation with the client, take steps to ensure that the smaller number of pre-tests are sufficient to guarantee questionnaire quality. For example, a cognitive pre-test may be warranted.
- 6) Pre-test completions shall not be included in the final dataset. An exception could be projects with:
 - a) hard-to-reach target groups, or
 - b) when **no** changes are made to the questionnaire.
- 7) Documentation of the pre-test(s) must be provided to the client before the questionnaire is finalized. The documentation must include (at minimum):
 - a) a description of the pre-test approach and number of interviews completed;
 - b) findings and any resulting modifications;
 - c) average survey completion time;
 - d) a statement of whether or not pre-test cases will be retained in the final data set.

The final research report must include this same information.

4. SAMPLING PROCEDURES

4.1. General

All researchers must:

- 1) clearly state the target group (universe) definition for the research study; in the case of Internet surveys this includes explicit identification of whether or not non-Internet users are part of the target group definition;
- 2) clearly state the method(s) used to obtain a sample of this target group, including whether the method is a probability survey, a non-probability survey, or a census.

4.2. Probability Sampling

- 1) The list or sample source must be clearly stated, including any of its limitations/exclusions in representing the universe for the target sample and the potential for bias.
- 2) A full description of the sample design and selection procedures must be stated including:
 - a) sample stratification variables (if any);
 - b) any multi-stage sampling steps taken;
 - c) at each sampling stage, the method of achieving a probability sample (e.g., random selection) shall be explained, and any subsets of the universe that have

- been excluded or underrepresented shall be stated (e.g., Internet non-users), although whenever possible, an estimate of the percentage of the universe that has been excluded or underrepresented must be provided;
- d) the number of attempted re-contacts and procedure for attempted re-contact must be stated;
 - e) respondent eligibility/screening criteria must be defined, including any quota controls used (e.g., gender).
- 3) Assuming that proper probability sampling procedures have been followed, the sampling error must then be stated based upon a given sample size at a given confidence level, but researchers must take care to:
- a) adjust for the design effect due to weighting in calculating the margin of sampling error (see endnote [S4N1](#)) when subsets of the sample (e.g., regions, age groups, language groups) have been over or under-sampled;
 - b) not to mislead clients into believing that a sampling error quoted on the total sample will be the same as that based upon a subset of the total sample;
 - c) where possible, express sampling error for key subsets in a survey;
 - d) state that sampling error, as measured by the margin of error, is but one source of potential error, and that best practices will be applied to minimize the influence of non-sampling error, including non-response error, on the survey results.
- 4) Records of the disposition of the contact sample must be retained and provided in the final report in sufficient detail to allow secondary analysis of the outcome rates (see [subsection 8.4.](#)).

4.3. Non-Probability Sampling

4.3.1. Justification of Use of Non-probability Samples

- 1) When a choice is made to use a non-probability sample, that choice must be justified, in both the research proposal and the research report. The justification must take into account the statistical limitations in reporting on data from a non-probability sample, and limitations in generalizing the results to the target population.

4.3.2. Sampling for Non-probability Samples

- 1) As for probability sampling, the list or sample source must be stated, including its limitations in covering the universe for the target sample.
- 2) The precise quota control targets and screening criteria must also be stated including the source of such targets (e.g., census data or other data source).
- 3) Deviations from target achievement must be shown in the report (i.e., actual versus target).

4.3.3. Statistical Treatment of Non-probability Samples

- 1) There can be no statements made about margins of sampling error on population estimates when non-probability samples are used.
- 2) The survey report must contain a statement on why no margin of sampling error is reported, based on the following template: "Respondents for this survey were selected from 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. [If weighting was done, state the following sentence on weighting:] The data have been weighted to reflect the demographic composition of (target population). Because the sample is based on those who initially self-selected for participation [in the panel], no estimates of sampling error can be calculated.”

This statement must be prominently placed in descriptions of the methodology in the survey report, including the executive summary.

- 3) In general, for non-probability surveys it is not appropriate to use statistical significance tests. However, tests of significance with non-probability samples are appropriate when the objective is to establish the extent of the relationship among variables. If tests of significance are used with non-probability samples, it must be clearly noted that conclusions from these tests cannot be generalized to any population.

Any use of descriptive statistics must clearly indicate that they are not formally generalizable to any group other than the sample studied, and there cannot be any formal statistical inferences about how the descriptive statistics for the sample represent any larger population.

In the case of non-probability surveys that employ an experimental design in which respondents are randomly assigned to different cells, it is appropriate to use statistical significance tests to compare results from different cells.

4.4. Quota Sampling

Quota sampling techniques are typically used for panel surveys and personal intercept studies to achieve sample representativeness. Quotas may also be used to control representativeness on other data collection methodologies.

- 1) A full description of the regional, demographic or other classification variable controls used for balancing the sample to achieve representativeness must be described.
- 2) The precise quota control targets and screening criteria must also be stated including the source of such targets (e.g., census data or other data source).
- 3) Deviations from target achievement must be shown in the report (i.e., actual versus target).

4.5. Multi-Mode Surveys

Multi-mode surveys are ones where different methods of questionnaire administration are used. They will often involve a combination of online and telephone methods, although there are other possibilities (e.g., in-person, mail, fax).

When a survey is conducted using multiple modes of questionnaire administration:

- 1) The reasons for using a multi-mode rather than a single-mode method must be stated, both in the research proposal and the survey report.
- 2) When the plan is to combine data collected via different modes in the data analyses, then steps must be taken to ensure as much comparability as possible across the different survey modes in terms of question wording and presentation of response options.

- 3) Steps must be taken to ensure avoidance of duplicate respondents in different modes. The steps taken, and the results, must be documented.

4.6. Census Surveys

In a census survey, an attempt is made to collect data from every member of a population. For example, an organization might want to do a survey of all of its employees. In this case, the population is “all of the organization’s employees”, and this would qualify as a census survey if all employees are invited to participate in the survey.

The list whereby all members of the target population are to be contacted and invited to respond must be clearly described, including any of its limitations/exclusions in representing that target population. Whenever possible, an estimate of the percentage of the population that is excluded from the list must be provided and the potential impact of their exclusion on the research results considered. For example, a list might comprise employee email addresses to be used in a census of an organization where it is known that 5% of employees do not have access to email. In this situation, the census would be of “all employees with email addresses”, with due consideration given to the impact on results of any systematic demographic or other differences (location, age, job function) likely to distinguish employees with emails from those without emails.

- 1) The number of attempted re-contacts and procedure for attempted re-contact must be stated.
- 2) Do not state a margin of sampling error, as this does not apply to census surveys because no sample is drawn.

The survey report must contain a statement on why no margin of sampling error is reported, based on the following template: “Since the entire population of [target population] was invited to participate in this study there is no margin of sampling error to be estimated or reported. The potential impact of non-sampling error due to non-response is discussed in the results section of the report. [If weighting was done, state the following sentence on weighting:] The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of [the target population (if known) or the sampling frame (e.g., client-supplied list)] on the main known characteristics.”

- 3) There is no need to use inferential statistical tests since the results (frequencies, percentages) reported in a census survey describe the entire target population.

However, it is acceptable to use statistical significance tests to measure differences between sub-groups within the target population.

As with any surveys, be they sample or census, the impact on the results of non-sampling error due to non-response must be assessed to the extent possible, and appropriate caveats on the interpretation of the results must be clearly stated.

5. RETAINING PUBLIC CONFIDENCE

Researchers must make every reasonable effort to gain, retain and increase public confidence in research organizations and in public opinion research conducted for the Government of Canada.

5.1. Respondent Rights

Researchers must act in a manner respectful of survey respondents and ensure the protection of their rights as these relate to participation in survey research. Surveys must be conducted free of embarrassment and in an environment of trust and goodwill.

5.1.1. Informed Consent and Use of Information

- 1) In obtaining the necessary agreement from respondents to participate, the researcher must inform them of the study sponsor and of the general subject and purpose of the survey. Exceptions may apply. (See [subsection 2.1.](#), paragraph 2).
- 2) Survey questions must be limited to the gathering of information relevant to the stated research objectives. The researcher must ensure that the data collected will not be used for any other purpose unless the respondent provides explicit informed consent for that additional use (e.g., to help resolve a customer complaint).
- 3) The survey data must not under any circumstances be used for direct marketing or other sales approaches to the respondent or the respondent's household.
- 4) Researchers must provide online research candidates the opportunity to ask questions about the study and must answer any questions they might have in a clear, honest and non-deceptive manner.

5.1.2. Right to Refuse

- 1) Researchers must respect the right of a respondent to refuse to participate in a survey or to terminate the survey at any point.

5.1.3. Identity of Research Firm

- 1) The research firm conducting the survey must be identified and sufficient information must be provided to allow survey candidates to contact the researcher without difficulty should they want to.

5.1.4. Protection of Anonymity and Confidentiality

- 1) The anonymity of respondents must always be preserved unless they have given their informed and explicit consent to the contrary. If these respondents have given informed consent for data to be passed on in a form which allows them to be personally identified, the researcher must ensure that the information will be used for research purposes only, OR, if requested by the respondent, to resolve a customer complaint. The same holds true when respondents' answers are collated, with their informed consent, with pre-existing data that allows such identification (e.g., with an administrative data base). Moreover, such personally identifiable information must not be used for any purpose unrelated to the current study, such as direct marketing, list-building, credit rating, fund-raising, or any marketing activities directed at those individual respondents.
- 2) Under no circumstances are completed surveys or other material (e.g., digital media) containing respondent identity, or information that might allow respondents to be identified, to be released by researchers to clients or other third parties.
- 3) When verbatim comments are collected they must not be attributed to the respondent, directly or indirectly, without the respondent's explicit informed consent. Care must be taken when reporting verbatim comments that nothing in the comment, including content, vocabulary and/or style of writing, could serve to identify the individual respondent.

5.1.5. Use of Respondent Lists

- 1) Where lists are used for sample selection, the source of the list must be disclosed to potential respondents. When the sample comprises individuals outside the Government of Canada (e.g., clients of a particular department, Canadians more generally), researchers must ensure that lists are permission-based for research purposes, including, when appropriate, obtaining written assurances from the list provider (who may be the client) that this is the case.
- 2) When the sample comprises employees within the Government of Canada, employee lists may be used even if no explicit permission to use that information for survey purposes has been obtained so long as the survey topic is relevant to the respondents' employment (e.g., an employee satisfaction survey). To the extent possible the researcher must ensure that the data contained in permission-based and employee lists are up-to-date.
- 3) Client-supplied lists provided for specific projects must not be used for any other projects or for adding names to the researcher's databases. If they have been updated by the researcher during the project (e.g., to correct errors), those updated lists must be returned to the client upon completion of the project. All client-supplied lists still in the researcher's possession at project completion, and after any updates have been forwarded to the client, must be destroyed.

5.2. Avoidance of Harassment

- 1) The researcher must take all reasonable steps to ensure that respondents are not in any way hindered or embarrassed by any survey, and that they are not in any way adversely affected as a result of it. Researchers must address sensitive subject matter in a way that will minimize the discomfort and apprehension of respondents.
- 2) Researchers must reduce any inconvenience or irritation their e-mail invitations might cause the recipient by clearly stating its purpose in the first sentence and keeping the total message as brief as possible.

5.3. Privacy Issues Specific to Online Survey Research

- 1) Researchers must have a readily accessible policy statement concerning the use of cookies, log files and, if applicable, software. This statement may be either included in their privacy policy or it may appear in a separate document. Software must not be installed on respondents' computers without their knowledge or consent. In addition, respondents must be able to remove the researcher's software easily from their machines (e.g., for Windows users, the software must appear in the Add/Remove Programs folder in their Control Panel).
- 2) Any links to data protection, privacy policy or cookie policy statements must be given at the start of the questionnaire.
- 3) A respondent's email address is personal information and must be protected in the same way as other identifiers.

6. DATA COLLECTION FROM CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE OR VULNERABLE RESPONDENTS

6.1. General

- 1) Researchers must take special care when collecting survey data from children and young people and respondents who are otherwise vulnerable. (A "child" is defined as "under the age of 13" and a "young person" as "aged 13-15".) The welfare of the children, young people and vulnerable persons must be the researcher's primary consideration. These respondents must not be disturbed or harmed by the survey experience. Sensitive topics or issues that could upset children and young people (e.g., relationships with other children or with parents, sexual activities, use of drugs or alcohol) or vulnerable persons (e.g., social embarrassment related to the source of their vulnerability) must be dealt with using special care to minimize any discomfort or apprehension.
- 2) These issues are of particular concern for online research. Children and young people may be familiar with using the Internet, but research has found them to be naïve and trusting, happily disclosing information about themselves or their households without realizing the implications of doing so. Understandably, parent groups, consumer groups and legislators are particularly concerned about potential exploitation of children and young people on the Internet. It is for this reason that these standards place a greater burden of care on researchers than is the case for research with adults.
- 3) All explanations related to data protection, privacy policy, adult consent and other notices must be capable of being understood by children.
- 4) In addition to these standards, researchers must observe all relevant laws and national codes specifically related to children and young people.

6.2. Consent of Responsible Adult

- 1) The consent of a parent or responsible adult (guardian, etc.) must be obtained prior to inviting a child or young person under 16 to participate in a survey. Sufficient information must be provided to this responsible adult to enable an informed decision about giving such consent. In particular, the researcher must specify the nature of any potentially sensitive questions when seeking parental consent for their children's participation in the research. The name of the person giving the consent must be recorded.
- 2) The adult consent only allows the interviewer to invite the child/young person to participate. The child/young person must be given an opportunity to agree or refuse to take part in the survey. To that end, the researcher must inform the child/young person of the purpose of the research in terms likely to be readily understood by them.
- 3) Surveys made openly available on Web sites must require respondents to give their age before any other information is requested. If the age given is less than 16 years, the child/young person must be excluded from giving further information until the appropriate adult consent has been obtained. Information about how informed consent can be obtained can be provided to the child/young person at that time if their participation is desired.

- 4) It might be difficult to determine with certainty the age of the respondent and whether or not the consent of a responsible adult is required. Despite those difficulties, the researcher must make every reasonable effort to comply with the rules set out in these standards.
- 5) An exception is when it is not possible to obtain parental/guardian consent (e.g., street kids) and the benefits of the information are judged to outweigh the possible harm to respondents (e.g., youth engaged in risky behaviour).

6.3. Process for Obtaining Consent

6.3.1. Parent Contact Details

- 1) It is permissible to ask children/young people to provide contact details for a parent/responsible adult in order for consent to be sought, as long as this purpose is made clear in the request.

6.3.2. Children/Young People of Online Panelists or Other Approved List Members

- 1) In cases where survey data are to be collected from children of adult online panelists or children/young people of other online list members, an e-mailed request for consent to the adult panelist or list member must contain:
 - a) a notice stipulating that the online survey is intended for the child/young person within the household;
 - b) the name and contact details of the researcher and the name of the client (if the client agrees);
 - c) an explanation of the objectives of the research and nature of the data to be collected from the child/young person; and
 - d) an explanation of how the data will be used.

6.3.3. Children Recruited through Web sites

- 1) In cases where children are being recruited from Web sites, the following measures must be implemented:
 - a) On Web sites aimed at persons under age 16, a note to children/young people, informing them of the requirement for adult consent must be prominently displayed in all notices about the survey (i.e. before the respondent has accessed the survey itself). This note must include a clear explanation of the subject matter and objectives of the research and the name and contact information of the researcher. The notice must request the contact information (e.g., email address) of the parent or other responsible adult, and make clear the fact that the authentic responsibility of this individual consent will be verified (e.g., through a separate follow-up by telephone, regular mail, etc.).
 - b) For Web sites aimed at adults, a notice to parent or guardian, seeking their consent for their child to be asked to participate in the research, must be posted on the Web site. This notice must include:
 - i.* a heading explaining that this is a notice for parents;
 - ii.* the name and contact details of the researcher and the name of the client (if the client agrees);
 - iii.* an explanation of the objectives of the research and nature of the data to be collected from the child/young person;
 - iv.* an explanation of how the data will be used;

- v. a description of the procedure for giving and verifying consent; and
- vi. a request for a parent's contact e-mail address, address or phone number for verification of consent.

6.3.4. Acceptable Forms of Consent

- 1) A return e-mail from a parent or guardian giving their consent is acceptable, as long as additional steps are taken to ensure that the consent actually came from a parent — for example, following up with an e-mail, letter or phone call.

6.4. Collection of Personal Information

- 1) Personal information relating to other people (for example, parents) must not be collected from children. Consistent with the *Privacy Act* and *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act*, "Personal information" here means information about an identifiable individual. The exception is the contact information of a parent or responsible adult for the sole purpose of obtaining parental consent (see [subsection 6.3.1.](#)).

7. DATA COLLECTION

7.1. Collection of E-mail Addresses

- 1) Researchers are prohibited from using any subterfuge in obtaining e-mail addresses of potential respondents, such as collecting e-mail addresses from public domains, using technologies or techniques to collect e-mail addresses without individuals' awareness, and collecting e-mail addresses under the guise of some other activity.
- 2) Organizations make the emails of particular staff members available on Web sites, business cards and other promotional material to encourage outside contact on matters related to these individuals' professional responsibilities. E-mail addresses may be collected from such public domains for the purpose of business-to-business research (i.e. research directed at private sector firms, non-profit organizations, agencies of other levels of government, professional associations, etc.) when the topic can reasonably be judged relevant to those responsibilities. Consider, as a hypothetical example, the Chief Financial Officer of Company X, whose email address is provided on the company Web site. It would be permissible to invite her via the e-mail provided to participate in a survey assessing the opinions of Canadian executives on challenges facing companies in her company's sector and/or Canadian companies more generally. It would not be permissible to use this email to assess the preferences of consumers for particular household products.

7.2. Data Collection and Recruitment Techniques

- 1) Researchers must not make use of surreptitious, misleading or unsolicited data collection or recruitment techniques – including using spambots, spiders, sniffers or other 'agents' that collect personal information without the respondent's explicit awareness.

7.3. Misleading E-mail Return Addresses

- 1) Researchers are prohibited from using false or misleading return e-mail addresses, including spoofing the “from” label of e-mail messages, when recruiting respondents over the Internet.

7.4. Opt-out

- 1) A respondent must be able to refuse participation in the survey via a suitable option, and to refuse further contact by e-mail in connection with the survey.

7.5. Access Panel Participation Frequency

- 1) To be a respondent to a Government of Canada survey, panel members may not have participated in any Government of Canada survey as a member of that panel or any other panel, or a survey on a similar subject matter by any data collection mode in the previous 30 days. *An exception would be when a study’s research design requires a follow-up survey with respondents and the respondent has agreed at the time of the initial survey to be re-contacted for that purpose.*

7.6. Incentives/Honoraria

- 1) The details of any incentives/honoraria to be used for an online survey must be provided in both the proposal and report documentation, including:
 - a) the type of incentive/honoraria (e.g., monetary, non-monetary);
 - b) the nature of the incentive (e.g., for monetary, prize, points, donations, direct payments);
 - c) the estimated dollar value of the incentives to be disbursed.

7.7. Monitoring of Online Survey Fieldwork

- 1) Each online survey must be closely monitored throughout the fieldwork to ensure that responses are valid, that the survey is administered consistently throughout the data collection period, and that the responses are being recorded accurately.
- 2) If requested, clients must be provided with interim data tabulation within the first few days and throughout the fieldwork period. Appropriate care must be taken to ensure that no individual responses can be identified.

7.8. Detecting and Dealing with Satisficing

- 1) The access panel provider, working with the client, shall implement procedures to identify and remove fraudulent and inattentive panel members or respondents, documenting these procedures and actions taken.

7.9. Reminders to Non-respondents

- 1) Where feasible, there must be attempts made to remind non-respondents of the invitation to participate in the survey.
- 2) A maximum of three reminders may be sent.
- 3) Reminders must not be sent to individuals who have opted out of the survey.

- 4) When feasible, reminders must not be sent to individuals who have completed the survey, even if only partially.

7.10. Ensure Respondents Answer a Survey Only Once

- 1) For any online survey research project, there must be documented procedures to limit the possibility that respondents can answer a survey for which they have been selected, more than once.

7.11. Data Storage

- 1) Data must be stored according to the requirements described in [section 13](#).

8. OUTCOME RATES

8.1. General

The most often reported outcome rate for a survey is the response rate. Other common outcome rates are cooperation, refusal and contact rates. While outcome rates are often used to compare survey instrument and field work quality across survey research projects, the reality is that there are many different ways of calculating and reporting outcome rates, including the ubiquitous response rate. For this reason, it is important that researchers who conduct surveys for the Government of Canada clearly define how their reported response rates (or other outcome rates) have been calculated **and** provide final dispositions of cases in sufficient detail to allow secondary analysis of outcome rates.

To help researchers calculate and report outcome rates that will allow useful comparisons between online surveys, definitions of the most commonly used outcome rates and of the case categories entering into their calculations are provided in this section. Moreover, the Government of Canada's **mandatory requirements** for managing and reporting outcome rates when conducting online surveys are stipulated in [subsection 8.5](#).

8.2. Outcome Rates Definitions

Below is a definition of response rate/participation rate, cooperation, refusal and contact rate. Reporting the response/participation rate (response rate for probability sample surveys and censuses, participation rate for non probability samples) is mandatory; this rate must be included in the final report submitted to Library and Archives Canada as per the [POR Contract Regulations](#). The other rates included below are optional and can assist in better understanding the causes of a low response rate. For example, a researcher might want to point out that even though the response rate is low, it was not due to refusals (shown by a low refusal rate) or because only a few of the attempted contacts were successful (shown by a low contact rate, for instance many emails bounced back in an online survey). This additional information provides greater context and detail on the quality of the data.

Response Rate/Participation Rate:

Total number of responding units divided by the total number of potentially eligible cases (including those whose eligibility could not be determined).

It is important to note that the term “response rate” is reserved for probability sample surveys and censuses, while the term “participation rate” must be used for non-probability sample surveys.

Cooperation Rate:

Total number of responding units divided by the total number of known eligible cases (excluding those whose eligibility could not be determined).

Refusal Rate:

Total number of refusals (including break-offs) divided by the total number of potentially eligible cases (including those whose eligibility could not be determined).

Contact Rate:

Total number of contacts that were made successfully (regardless of whether or not a contact was made with the targeted respondent, for example when a family member or colleague who does not qualify intercepts the survey invitation) divided by the total number of potentially eligible cases (including those whose eligibility could not be determined).

8.3. Case Category Definitions

Cases involved in online surveys can be broken down into four broad categories:

1. Invalid cases – These can only include clearly invalid cases (e.g., invitations mistakenly sent to people who did not qualify for the study, incomplete or missing email addresses in a client-supplied list).
2. Unresolved (U)– These include all the cases where it cannot be established whether the invitation was sent to an eligible or an ineligible respondent or unit, for example when email invitations bounce back or remain without an answer before the candidate could be qualified.
3. In-scope non-responding (IS) – These include all refusals, either implicit or explicit; all non-contacts and early break-offs of known eligible cases; and other eligible non-respondents.
4. Responding units (R) – These include cases who have participated but who were disqualified afterwards (e.g., when admissible quotas have been reached); it also includes all completed surveys or partially completed surveys that meet the criteria set by the researcher to be included in the analysis of the data.

Cases in categories 2 through 4 are all included in the broad category of “potentially eligible” cases. However, cases in category 1 are considered “invalid” and are not included in the calculation of outcome rates.

8.4. Final Case Dispositions and Response or Participation Rate Formula

The following record of final case disposition must be included in the survey final report, making sure to identify the case categories (i.e., Invalid; Unresolved; In-scope non-responding; Responding). The elements provided as examples within each category are for studies where the unit of analysis is the household. They may be adjusted for the type of study conducted (e.g., B2B, specialty groups).

Total telephone numbers used:

Invalid cases

- invitations mistakenly sent to people who did not qualify for the study
- incomplete or missing email addresses

Unresolved (U)

- email invitations bounce back
- email invitations unanswered

In-scope non-responding units (IS)

- Non-response from eligible respondents
- Respondent refusals
- Language problem
- Selected respondent not available (illness; leave of absence; vacation; other)
- Early break-offs

Responding units (R)

- Completed surveys disqualified – quota filled
- Completed surveys disqualified for other reasons
- Completed interviews

$$\text{Participation Rate/Response Rate} = R/(U+IS+R)$$

8.5. Government of Canada's Mandatory Requirements

8.5.1. Outcome Rates Targets

- 1) The online survey must be designed to achieve the highest practical rates of success.

8.5.2. Monitoring Outcome Rates During Data Collection

- 1) Monitoring of case dispositions/reasons for non-response shall be carried out on an ongoing basis, throughout the entire field period.
- 2) This information must be provided to the client upon request.

8.5.3. Reporting Outcome Rates

- 1) Researchers providing public opinion survey research services to the Government of Canada must, at a minimum, report the obtained response rate (for probability sample surveys and censuses) or participation rate (for non-probability samples).
- 2) Other outcome rates may also, optionally, be reported.

- 3) The report must describe, to the extent possible, the degree to which characteristics of the respondents match or depart from known characteristics (e.g., demographics) of the target population or sample frame, and discuss the possible influence of any resulting non-response bias on the interpretation of survey results (see [subsection 14.7.](#)).

8.5.4. Final Dispositions of Cases

- 1) The report must include the final disposition of cases in sufficient detail to allow accurate secondary analysis of the response/participation rate and other outcome rates.

9. CODING

9.1. Developing Code Frames

- 1) The initial code list/frame shall be developed based on a systematic review of a minimum of 10% of open-ended responses and 50% of partial open-ended responses, where a frame does not already exist. The initial code list/frame must be provided to the client for approval upon request.
- 2) The researcher shall ensure that coders working on the project are provided with instructions and training that shall include, as a minimum:
 - a) an overview of the project;
 - b) identification of questions or variables to be coded;
 - c) the minimum proportion or number of a sample (and its make-up) used to produce code frames;
 - d) where necessary or appropriate, specific subgroups required to develop code frames (e.g., by region, user or non-user);
 - e) guidelines for the inclusion of codes in the code frame (e.g., decisions or rules regarding what must be included or excluded from a given code);
 - f) any use to be made of code frames from a previous project or stage;
 - g) any other requirements or special instructions specific to the project.

9.2. Code Frame Approval/Coding Procedures

- 1) Where “don’t know” and “no response” have been used, these shall be distinguishable from each other.
- 2) The researcher shall have clear rules or guidelines for the treatment of responses in “other” or catch-all categories; if the “other” or catch-all category exceeds 10% of responses to be coded, the responses must be reviewed with a view to reducing the size of the group.
- 3) The researcher shall ensure that there is a systematic method of verifying a minimum of 10% of questionnaires coded per project and the verification shall be undertaken by a second person.

10. DATA EDITING/IMPUTATION

10.1. Standards

- 1) An accurate record of any changes made to the original data set shall be kept. No data shall be assumed/imputed without the knowledge and approval of the researcher's project manager. Comparison to the original data source shall be the first step in the process. Any imputation processes, including the logic of the imputation method(s) used shall be documented and provided to the client with the initial data tables. All edit specifications shall be documented.
- 2) Where forced editing is used, the logic of the forcing shall be documented and test runs carried out, with the results documented to show that the forcing has the desired effect.
- 3) Data editing/imputation must be used cautiously. The degree and impact of imputation must be considered when analyzing the data, as the imputation methods used may have a significant impact on distributions of data and the variance of estimates.
- 4) The researcher shall include documentation of any imputation/forced editing, both in a technical appendix and in the final report.

11. DATA ANALYSIS

11.1. Inferences and Comparisons

- 1) Researchers must base statements of comparisons and other statistical conclusions derived from survey data on generally accepted statistical practice.

11.2. Analysis Records

- 1) The researcher shall keep accurate and descriptive records of the analysis process for a minimum of three years, to ensure that any analysis undertaken can be replicated at a later date.

11.3. Data Analysis Verification

- 1) The researcher shall have in place procedures to ensure the tabulations and other outputs have been checked.
- 2) As a minimum, these checks shall verify:
 - a) completeness, meaning that all tables are present as specified, including the results of all reported significance tests;
 - b) that abbreviations for headings or open-ended responses accurately reflect the full content;
 - c) that the base for each table is correct against other tables or frequency counts;
 - d) that the standard breaks/banner points are checked against source questions;
 - e) that all derived data items are checked against their source;
 - f) that the figures for subgroups and nets are correct;
 - g) that there are no blank tables (i.e., with no data);

- h) weighting (e.g., by test tables);
 - i) frequency counts prior to running tables, in order both to ensure the accuracy of data and to determine base sizes for subgroups;
 - j) spelling and legibility;
 - k) that any statistical analysis used is appropriate and correct, both in its descriptive and inferential aspects.
- 3) For any subsequent outputs, appropriate checks shall be applied.

12. DELIVERY OF DATA TABLES

12.1. Delivery of Stand-alone Hard or Soft Copy of Data Tables

- 1) When data are reported to the client, such as in a stand-alone hard or soft copy of data tables, the following shall be taken into account, as appropriate:
 - a) reference to the actual source question to which the data pertains;
 - b) inclusion of a description of any weighting method applied to the data;
 - c) clear identification of any subgroups used;
 - d) availability of the bases for each question, so that the number of respondents who have actually answered the question is identifiable;
 - e) the number or proportion of respondents who replied “don’t know” or gave “no answer”;
 - f) availability of both weighted and unweighted bases;
 - g) clear and complete definition and explanation of all variables used in the analysis of the data, including any significance testing, indexing, scoring, scaling and calculations of means, medians, modes and standard deviations;
 - h) the types of statistical tests being used and their level of precision;
 - i) information on cell suppression and other measures to assure confidentiality;
 - j) warnings on results which are unreliable due to very small sample sizes.

12.2. Electronic Data Delivery

- 1) The researcher shall provide the client with a data file.
- 2) The following shall be checked prior to data release:
 - a) compatibility of the file format with the software specification agreed with the client;
 - b) completeness (i.e., the correct number of files and records are in each file);
 - c) inclusion of all appropriate documentation to allow for replication of the data analysis and additional analyses, including where applicable:
 - i. labelling of the contents of the file, i.e., fully labelled variables and value labels;
 - ii. identification and description of any computed or recoded variables, and instructions on limitations of use;
 - iii. labelled weighting variables and a description of how these were applied;

- 2) Protection against legally-sanctioned access: Because some jurisdictions allow their authorities, under certain circumstances, to access all data stored on servers located in that jurisdiction (e.g., in the United States under provisions of the *Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act*, known as USA PATRIOT Act: see the [Treasury Board Secretariat's overview](#)), the researcher must ensure that all the databases containing any information related to the survey are stored on **servers and back-up servers** located solely in Canada.
 - a) If the client has first consented in writing, these servers may be located in another country where:
 - i. equivalent protections are given to personal information as in Canada under legislation such as the *Privacy Act*, R.S. 1985, c. P-21, and the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act*, S.C. 2000, c. 5, and under any applicable policies of the Government of Canada; and
 - ii. the laws do not allow the government of that country or any other entity or person to seek or obtain the right to view or copy any information relating to the survey without first obtaining the client's written consent.
 - b) In connection with giving consent to locating a database in another country, the client may, at their option, require the researcher to provide a legal opinion (from a lawyer qualified in the foreign country) that the laws in that country meet the requirements of paragraph 2) a), above, or may require the researcher to pay for the Government of Canada to obtain such a legal opinion. The Government of Canada has the right to reject any request to store survey data in a country other than Canada if there is any reason to be concerned about the security, privacy, or integrity of the data. The Government of Canada may also require that any data sent or processed outside of Canada be encrypted with Government of Canada-approved cryptography and that the private key required to decrypt the data be kept in Canada in accordance with key management and storage processes approved by the Government of Canada.
 - c) The researcher must ensure that all servers, including back-up servers, on which any data relating to the survey is stored are physically and logically independent (meaning there is no direct or indirect connection of any kind) from all other databases, unless those databases are located in Canada (or in another country approved by the client under paragraph 2) a)) and otherwise meet the requirements of this section.
 - d) The researcher must ensure that all data relating to the survey is processed only in Canada or in another country approved by the client under paragraph 2) a).
 - e) The researcher must ensure that all domestic network traffic (meaning traffic or transmissions initiated in one part of Canada to a destination or individual located in another part of Canada) is routed exclusively through Canada, unless the client has first consented in writing to an alternate route. The client will only consider requests to route domestic traffic through another country that meets the requirements of paragraph 2) a).
- 3) The researcher must not subcontract (including to an affiliate) any function that involves providing a subcontractor with access to any data relating to the survey unless the client first consents in writing.
- 4) Protection of data from international surveys: When the target population for a survey comprises individuals resident in a jurisdiction outside Canada, researchers must ensure that data is stored in a manner consistent with the relevant laws of that jurisdiction.

- 5) Protection against physical damage to servers: Researchers must also put in place measures to ensure the “physical” security of data and servers.

13.3. Temporary Storage of Data on Servers

- 1) If the temporary storage of data collected takes place on a server that is operated by another provider, the researcher must place the provider under the obligation to take the necessary steps to ensure that the requirements described in [subsection 13.2.](#) are met. Temporary storage of the collected data on the server must be terminated at the earliest possible time.

13.4. Transmission of Data Internationally

- 1) Before data is sent over the Internet to another country, researchers must check with competent authorities that the data transfer is permissible. The recipient may need to provide safeguards necessary for the protection of the data and ensure compliance with the requirements described in [subsection 13.2.](#)

13.5. Disclosure of Respondents’ Emails in Batch Transfers

- 1) Researchers must have adequate safeguards in place to ensure that when emails are sent in batches, the addresses of the respondents are not revealed.

13.6. In the Event of Any Data Breach

- 1) In the event of any data breach, the client must be informed immediately and provided with details about both the nature and the extent of the data breach.

14. MANDATORY SURVEY REPORT REQUIREMENTS

This section describes the survey report requirements that are **mandatory** under the *Public Opinion Research Contract Regulations* for all public opinion research conducted by an external supplier for the Government of Canada.

14.1. Library and Archives Canada

It is a legal requirement for institutions to send written public opinion research reports to Library and Archives Canada (LAC) within six months of the completion of the data collection for all reports.

- 1) Pursuant to the *Public Opinion Research Contract Regulations*, the *Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research*, and LAC deposit instructions, final reports must include the following at a minimum:
 - a) on the covering page,
 - i. the title of the project;
 - ii. the name of the research firm who entered into the contract;
 - iii. the contract number and the award date;
 - iv. the POR Registration Number;
 - v. the delivery date (the date the final version of the report was received) by the project authority;

- b) the achieved sample size against projected sample size and reasons, if relevant, for not obtaining the projected sample;
 - c) the sample source (e.g., lists) and sampling method, including the procedure for selecting respondents;
 - d) the weighting procedures, if applicable.
- 2) For non-probability samples, provide a rationale for choosing a non-probability sample.

14.5. Data Collection

- 1) Detailed description of methodology including:
 - a) the dates of fieldwork;
 - b) the data collection method(s); and if applicable,
 - c) the type and amount of incentives;
 - d) the target group for the research project;
 - e) the achieved sample size against projected sample size and reasons, if relevant, for not obtaining the projected sample;
 - f) the sample source and sampling method, including the procedure for selecting respondents;
 - g) the weighting procedures, if applicable.
- 2) For multi-mode surveys, provide a rationale for using a multi-mode rather than a single-mode method.
- 3) When at least some respondents were recruited and interviewed via their cell phones, provide a rationale for using this approach in addition to, or in place of, landline phones.

14.6. Quality Controls

- 1) The estimating and imputation procedures, if applicable.
- 2) A brief summary of other quality controls and procedures used.
- 3) For multi-mode surveys, detailed description of any data quality issues arising from combining data collected via different modes/instruments.

14.7. Results

- 1) An executive summary of key results and conclusions, linked to the survey objectives and research questions.
- 2) For probability samples, state the level of precision, including the margin of error and confidence interval for the total sample and any key sub-groups.
- 3) For non-probability samples and census surveys, the report must contain a statement on why no margin of sampling error is reported. Templates for such statement are provided in [subsection 4.3.3.](#), paragraph 2) for non-probability sample surveys and in [subsection 4.6.](#), paragraph 2) for census surveys.
- 4) For multi-mode surveys (see [subsection 4.5.](#)), the report must discuss whether there are any data quality issues arising from combining data collected via different modes. This could include, for example, discussion of possible impacts of mode on

key survey variables, the impact of any differences in participation rate/response rate by mode, and non-response bias analyses by mode.

- 5) For all types of surveys (probability sample, non-probability sample, census) the report must state the response/participation rate achieved (see [subsection 8.4.](#)).
- 6) All survey reports must contain a discussion of the potential for non-response bias for the survey as a whole and for key survey variables.
 - a) When external sources of comparison exist, as is the case when conducting a survey of the general population, the analysis of non-response bias will consist of a comparison of at least three variables in the survey sample with the equivalent parameters of the population, normally available from Statistics Canada. No extra surveys or interviews are required.
 - b) If no external sources of comparison exist, key variables in the sample could alternatively be compared to variables in the sampling frame. If no such variables exist, only then should the non-response bias discussion be based on comparison of early versus late responders or on observations made during data collection about characteristics of non-responders.
- 7) The final dispositions of cases in sufficient detail to allow secondary analysis of outcome rates (see [subsection 8.4.](#)).
- 8) The results that are based on subgroups and the number of cases used in subgroup analysis.

14.8. Appendices

The following materials must be provided in appendices attached to the final report.

- 1) Study Materials, including, when relevant, the invitations, recruitment instruments, questionnaires, descriptions or representations of any visual or auditory aids, and other data collection documents, **in all languages in which the research was conducted.**
- 2) There must be a version of the questionnaires displaying any instructions (e.g., skip, terminate, etc.) needed to understand the logic and flow of the questionnaire. Screen shot examples of the questionnaire's various types of graphic displays must be included to show how the questionnaire appeared to respondents.
- 3) A full set of tabulated data (see LAC requirements, [subsection 14.1.](#), paragraph 1) c) *i.*)
- 4) As an appendix, a statement of political neutrality signed by the researcher.

ENDNOTES

Important Notes

S0N1: Survey projects may involve more than one methodology (e.g., on-line and telephone surveys). As such, it may be necessary to consult more than one set of standards.

Section 4.

S4N1: The design effect due to weighting equals one plus the variance of the weights. The 'effective' sample size for which to calculate the margin of sampling error is the actual sample size divided by the design effect. (See: Spencer, B. 2000. An approximate design effect for unequal weighting when measurements may correlate with selection probabilities. *Survey Methodology* Vol. 26, No. 2, pp. 137-138.)