# The RESEARCH CORNER

**A Newsletter about Custom Public Opinion Research (POR) in the Government of Canada**

## RESEARCH INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

**Manage and find public opinion research**

The Research Information Management System (RIMS) for government opinion research is now available to researchers and communicators across government. Launched on-line in March 2005 on CommNet by the Public Opinion Research Directorate (PORD) of PWGSC, the RIMS database was initially piloted with a group of departments, improved over 2004/05 and then demonstrated to government communicators at the May 2005 Government Communicators' Conference. In May and June 2005, PORD held a series of RIMS orientation sessions for new and potential users.

Participants at the orientation sessions learned how to use RIMS to find details about contracted public opinion research that is currently underway or completed across government, and to determine possible partnering opportunities. They also learned that departmental public opinion research coordinators could use RIMS to keep track of and report on their departments' projects and to submit details of their new research projects directly to the POR advisors at PORD.

Check out RIMS at http://rims-sgir.gc.ca/english/home_e.asp. If you'd like more information, to arrange an orientation session for you or your department, or to get registered as a user, please email Stephanie.Charette@pwgsc.gc.ca or call us at (613) 995-9837.

## PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH IN THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA: AN ORIENTATION GUIDE

**Revised 2005 Edition**

Targeted at public opinion research (POR) practitioners in Government of Canada departments and agencies, a revised edition of *An Orientation Guide: Public Opinion Research in the Government of Canada* was released in print and on-line on CommNet in April 2005. The updated guide describes how to conduct POR in the Government of Canada and sets out the new requirements for POR as outlined in the Communications Policy of the Government of Canada, November 2004.

The guide also features a new chapter entitled "Project Management Tools for Research Studies", with information on the new Research Information Management System, and in Appendix 2, the Public Opinion Research File Checklist was added. The checklist is a new tool intended to assist departments in maintaining complete and comprehensive file documentation for their POR projects.

Please visit http://commnet.gc.ca/por_rop/publication/orientationguide/orient_01_e.html or to obtain print copies of the guide, please call us at (613) 995-9837, or email por-rop@pwgsc.gc.ca.
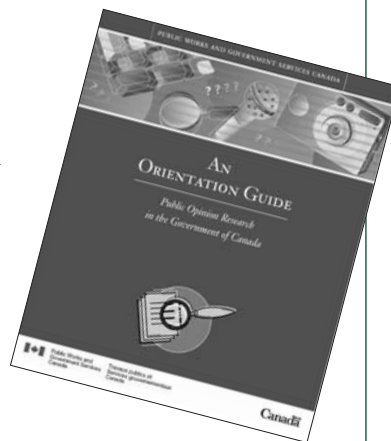
## RESULTS OF PORD CLIENT SATISFACTION SURVEY ENCOURAGING

Last December, Circum Network Inc. was hired by the Public Opinion Research Directorate (PORD) to conduct a web-based satisfaction survey of PORD's recent clients. We learned much about areas where you think we do well, and areas in which we can improve. Thanks to those who participated! Some of the report's major findings:

- Public opinion research coordinators value two fundamental service characteristics: respect for the hectic nature of the coordinators' work (time to provide advice or address concerns and ease of reaching POR advisors) and subject matter expertise (competence of staff, usefulness of the advice provided and consistency of information or advice from project to project).

- Areas where we can improve include the organization of information exchange events, ensuring the process is clear and transparent to all, and the service of making final reports more accessible.

We appreciate your feedback and welcome your views on how to improve our services to better meet your needs. Your thoughts and suggestions are welcome anytime!

# EDITORIAL

## Government of Canada and Private Sector POR Compared

At the June 2005 conference of the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association (MRIA) in Halifax, Laurent Marcoux, Director General of Public Works and Government Services Canada's Public Opinion Research and Advertising Coordination Sector, explored the similarities and differences between Government of Canada (GoC) and private sector public opinion research (POR).  Here are some of the major points made:

- The subject matter differs. Private sector research is usually tied to the company's products or services, and to corporate issues and reputation. GoC research deals with a huge variety of issues, reflecting any program or policy area of any federal institution can be very broad or very targeted; and often deals with sensitive topics or hard-to-reach populations.

- The research purpose often differs. While private sector research usually supports marketing and sales, GoC research supports the broad range of policy, program, and communications development, measures client satisfaction with services, etc.

- The target group often differs. The private sector focuses mainly on buyers/users of specific products or services. GoC research ranges from all citizens to very specific, sensitive or challenging groups.

- Level of influence differs. Private sector research may influence how a company conducts its own business; GoC research influence can be related to very high-profile public issues, may exert influence on key decisions and is part of the democratic exercise.

- Availability of research reports differs.  In the private sector, research is not usually made public, as it is driven by the need to sharpen competitive edge. All GoC public opinion research is made public.

- The external and internal environments enveloping GoC POR are often more complex and challenging than in the private sector.

- Supplier marketing to the GoC can sometimes be challenging, as it is often more difficult to determine who decision-makers are.

- The POR contracting process in the GoC is often more formal than in the private sector.

Despite all the differences, the basic tools and techniques involved in conducting POR are very similar.

# PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH
# HIGHLIGHTS

## Awareness and Attitudes Regarding Early Learning and Child Care
Social Development Canada
by Ekos Research Associates,
January 2005

A quantitative study was done to explore public patterns of usage and satisfaction with childcare in Canada and awareness of the importance of early childhood development. More specifically, the study addressed Canadians' level of knowledge and understanding of the issue, and evaluated the existing system of childcare, including the matter of government involvement in providing child care services.

The survey results indicated a widespread recognition of the importance of childcare, both in terms of supporting working parents and in providing opportunities for children's social, intellectual, emotional and physical development. Most Canadians view childcare options currently available in Canada in a positive light, and parents' experiences have been largely satisfactory. At the same time there is solid support for a national childcare system with federal involvement. The priority aspects of such a system would address inequities (i.e. low income families), provide early learning and address concerns related to availability and affordability.

## Public Views Toward Effective Corrections and the Correctional System in Canada
Correctional Services Canada
by Environics Research Group,
December 2004

Both a qualitative and a quantitative approach to this topic were commissioned with the goal of determining the views, attitudes and perceptions of Canadians with regard to the federal corrections system. Particular focus was placed on such topics as the conditions of inmates in federal prisons, the parole system in Canada, reintegration and rehabilitation of offenders, health issues in prison and sources of information about the corrections system.

Following the qualitative phase the overall impression of corrections in Canada participants gave the system a fair to middling grade. Most said they simply did not have enough information to really rate the system, but tended to think it is probably "okay".

The quantitative phase produced the following: just under half (47%) report that they are very or somewhat well-informed about the federal corrections system; half of Canadians (50%) believe conditions in facilities are too comfortable, while 3% see them as too harsh; nearly one third (31%) see conditions as about right; and about 6 in 10 (58%) disagree that all incarcerated offenders should at least be considered for parole.

## Qualitative Research with Focus Group Testing on Format for a New Healthy Living: Canada's Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Guide
Health Canada
by Millward Brown Goldfarb,
March 2004

This qualitative study was commissioned to evaluate the effectiveness of a new consumer piece entitled "Healthy Living: Canada's Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Guide".

Although participants stated that healthy eating and physical activity are on their minds, they were not top-of-mind concerns. They did perceive that obesity is becoming a problem in Canada and they blame this problem on both a lack of physical activity and the excessive consumption of convenience foods.

The concept behind the guide was very well received. Positive elements in the guide included: it was easy to read; the colours and graphics were eye-catching and encouraged people to read it; and the tips included gave people some new ideas.

There were some negative elements including: it is too general to be really useful —not enough new information in it; the information is not hard-hitting enough—raises awareness rather than motivation; no indication given of how bad 'junk' food is.

The overall message of the guide was clear. A healthy lifestyle depends on both a balanced diet and physical activity. It was perceived to be a reminder to take care of oneself.

## Seniors Canada Online Focus Group Testing: Exploring What Government Related Business the Target Audiences Want to do Online
Veterans Affairs Canada
by Ipsos-Reid, March 2004

Three focus groups were conducted with members of the Canadian Seniors Partnership Advisory Panel, to allow them to speak broadly and openly about their expectations of the kinds of online business and services government should provide to seniors, their families, caregivers and supporting services organizations. The research also sought to discover ways to improve the utility of the Seniors Canada Online site.

In addition to being given hypothetical scenarios regarding circumstances relating to aging and draft depictions of service enhancements, seniors were asked to volunteer a wish list of online services. Common themes which emerged in terms of new ideas for service improvements were: providing clearer routes to information; enabling more person-to-person contacts and creating more opportunities for seniors to offer their input in the policies and government outcomes that impact their lives; improving linkages between levels of government to allow for single-source services.

With respect to accessibility, some ideas mentioned were: providing tutorials to teach seniors how to use the Internet in general and the Seniors Canada Online Site; providing a verbal interface so the keyboard would not need to be used; providing printable versions of site materials in large-type; and use of plain language.

The results also informed the development of a questionnaire for an online survey among visitors to Seniors Canada Online.

# ON THE SHELVES

PORD is the repository for all custom research reports completed by the Government of Canada. The reports can be reviewed at Library and Archives of Canada or copies can be accessed using inter-library loan through departmental and local libraries. Many are useful resources for the Government of Canada research community. Below is a sample of the reports received.

- *National Baseline Survey of Pandemic Influenza Attitudes and Awareness Amongst Canadians* (Health Canada, August 2004)

- *Evaluation of the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC/CLIC) Program* (Citizenship & Immigration, July 2004)

- *CRTC Consumer Survey—Use of Telecommunication Services & Spending* (Canadian Radio Television & Telecommunications, September 2004)

- *Public Opinion Research: Income Tax Option & Internet Questionnaire* (Statistics Canada, July 2003)

- *Qualitative Feedback on Teacher and Student Kits* (Library of Parliament, March 2004)

- *Landowners Survey 2004 / Industry Survey* (National Energy Board, May 2004)

- *Sydney Tar Ponds and Coke Ovens Public Perception Study* (Environment Canada, March 2004)

- *Public Views on Commercial Hunting and Current Federal Seal Hunting Policy* (Fisheries & Oceans Canada, February 2005)

- *Qualitative Research on Distress Alerting Risk Assessment for Small Commercial Vessels* (Transport Canada, April 2004)

- *Perceptions of Air Travel Safety and Security in Canada: Wave III* (Transport Canada, March 2004)

- *CNSC Survey of Canadians' Knowledge of and Attitudes toward Nuclear Regulation* (Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, March 2004)

- *2004 Team Canada Inc Customer and Partner Feedback on Performance* (Industry Canada, January 2005)

- *International Biotechnology Survey 2005* (Industry Canada, February 2005)

- *Service Improvement Initiative at the CRTC: General Public Client Base* (Canadian Radio Television & Telecommunications, October 2003)

- *Genetics and Privacy: Exploring Canadian Values* (Department of Justice, March 2004)

- *Public Web Site Satisfaction Survey* (Western Economic Development, April 2004)

- *Consultations on CIHR Draft Privacy Best Practice Guidelines* (Canadian Institute of Health Research, November 2004)

- *2005 National Flag Day Poster Evaluation* (Canadian Heritage, November 2004)

- *Canada Child Tax Benefit Automated Services Research* (Canada Revenue Agency, January 2005)

- *Canadian Attitudes Toward Development Assistance* (Canadian International Development Agency, January 2004)

- *Consumer Perceptions of Food Safety and Quality* (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, November 2004)

- *Qualitative Research Associated with the Older Workers Pilot Project Initiative* (Human Resources Development Canada, June 2004)

## DID YOU KNOW?

In November 2004 the membership of the three Canadian associations representing the market research industry voted in favour of merging into the *Marketing Research and Intelligence Association (MRIA)*. The new association began its operations on January 1, 2005. MRIA is a not-for-profit association representing all aspects of the market intelligence and survey research industry with over

1,500 members pulled together from the now dissolved Canadian Association of Market Research Organizations (CAMRO), the Canadian Survey Research Council (CSRC) and the Professional Marketing Research Society (PMRS). MRIA offers courses and exams for the Certified Marketing Research Professional (CMRF) designation. MRIA's Internet site can be found at www.mria-arim.ca

## ? Questions or Suggestions

Do you have questions about public opinion research or suggestions about content for an upcoming issue? Contact the Editor at por-rop@pwgsc.gc.ca