

The

RESEARCH
CORNER

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

NEW POR PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENTS IN 2007

The May 2004 series of Public Works and Government Services Canada's (PWGSC) standing offers and supply arrangements for contracting public opinion research will expire in May 2007. These contracting tools have offered a number of benefits including faster and more efficient access for departments/agencies to the services of proven research suppliers, at competitive prices. The Communication Procurement Directorate and the Public Opinion Research Directorate (PORD) of PWGSC are currently working together on the development of criteria for the new standing offers and supply arrangements. The new contracting tools will cover both qualitative and quantitative methodologies and both traditional and online survey instruments. They will also contain quality requirements derived from PORD's best practices study *Improving Respondent Cooperation for Telephone Surveys* and reflect the advice provided by the Advisory Panel on Telephone Public Opinion Survey Quality. A committee made up of Departmental POR Coordinators will have an opportunity to comment on the scope of work, once it is in a more advanced stage.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2005-2006 ANNUAL REPORT

The fifth Annual Report on Public Opinion Research in the Government of Canada was released in September 2006. Providing an overview of research projects coordinated by PWGSC to help departments and agencies fulfill their research needs, the report also highlights trends in public opinion research across the Government of Canada.

In 2005-2006, 516 research projects were initiated for a contract value of \$26.8 million, using the services of 61 research firms across Canada. The 395 custom research projects accounted for 89 percent of the total contract value, while the 121 syndicated studies represented 11 per cent, and a contract value of \$2.9 million. The custom research breaks down as follows:

- Policy Development and Program Evaluation (38%)
- Advertising Initiatives (21%)
- Quality of Service (11%)
- Market Research (14%)
- Web Testing (9%)
- Other (7%).

Again this year the report includes summaries of the research undertaken by the ten most active departments and agencies and illustrates the activities of the research firms for both custom and syndicated research.

The report and other valuable resources are available on-line at http://commnet.gc.ca/por_rop/publication/index_e.html. To obtain print copies of the report, please call the Public Opinion Research Directorate at (613) 943-5130 or e-mail por-rop@pwgsc.gc.ca



NEW PROCEDURES FOR POR REPORTS

As part of its Federal Accountability Action Plan commitments, the Government amended the Communications Policy of the Government of Canada, Policy Requirements and related Procedures for public opinion research, effective August 1, 2006. Government of Canada departments and agencies are now required to make written public opinion research final reports available to the public through Library and Archives Canada (LAC) and the Library of Parliament within six months of the completion of fieldwork. Library and Archives Canada will post on a new Web site, in both official languages, each report's executive summary and contract information.

During the current transition period, the Public Opinion Research Directorate (PORD) is continuing to provide the service of receiving and reviewing final reports, prior to depositing them with the libraries, for projects contracted before August 1, 2006. For projects contracted on or after August 1, 2006, institutions must ensure the completeness of the reports and deposit them directly with the libraries through LAC's Web site www.porr-rrop.gc.ca. The Web site will automatically forward the reports to the Library of Parliament and to PORD.

PORD will provide guidance to departments, as required. For more information on the amended policy and procedures, please visit www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pubs_pol/sipubs/comm/siglist_e.asp.





EDITORIAL

THE RESEARCH CORNER

The Research Corner is produced by the Public Opinion Research Directorate, Consulting, Information & Shared Services Branch of PWGSC for the public opinion research community in the Government of Canada. It provides information about custom research projects, offers ideas and information about research developments, and provides a forum for the exchange of experiences and best practices.

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Produced by the Public Opinion Research Directorate, Consulting, Information & Shared Services Branch, PWGSC.

The Directorate has valuable resources available in either hard copy or on-line at <http://commnet.gc.ca>

- Public Opinion Research in the Government of Canada: An Orientation Guide
- Annual Reports
- Research Techniques: Guideposts to Value
- Successful Communication: Literacy and You

To obtain copies of these publications, please call (613) 943-2976 or e-mail por-rop@pwgsc.gc.ca.

Non-Response Bias, not Response Rates, the Key Issue:

Chicago Conference on Survey Response

Non-response bias, not the response rates by themselves, is the more important problem facing quality in surveys today, said Bob Groves of the University of Michigan at *The Research Industry Summit: Improving Respondent Cooperation*, presented in Chicago in late September by the Council for Marketing and Opinion Research (CMOR). In a presentation of his ongoing research on non-response bias, Groves says that the research has found that there is only a tenuous link between response rates and data quality. On the other hand, his analysis of scores of studies with a wide range of response rates shows that non-response bias is caused most often by three important factors: (1) the interest in the survey topic by the respondent; (2) the sponsor of the survey and (3) the impact of incentives.

The conference was held in order to explore the worldwide problem of declining response rates to surveys. The conference featured a roundtable of 33 international research leaders, including Bob Groves, Canada's Owen Charlebois (representing Arbitron), France's Didier Truchot (Ipsos), Gian Fulgoni of ComScore, and Jim Lochrie of General Motors. The roundtable discussed the problem of survey fatigue and the problems of online research. Kim Dedeker of Proctor and Gamble argued that the problems boil down to "integrity and methodology", presenting the results of a mail panel and an online

panel that showed diametrically opposite results. Online research is no panacea either: a study by ComScore (a research firm) that found that 0.25% of the population supplies 32% of responses to online surveys was brought up repeatedly during the conference. Yet according to Gian Fulgoni, Chairman of ComScore, even after the wide publicity that this study generated, ComScore still couldn't sell clients on paying more for a panel free of professional respondents.

While response rates may not have as significant an impact on data quality as other factors, Patrick Glaser of CMOR presented some food for thought from that organization's survey of survey non-respondents across the United States, which found that their most important reasons for refusing to participate were: "I didn't have time" (73%), "I wasn't interested in the topic" (57%) and "the interviewer called when I was eating" (50%).

For more information on the non-response bias issue and the relevant presentations from this conference, please see the Research Corner section in CommNet at http://commnet.gc.ca/por_rop/rc_cr/index_e.html





PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

The Government of Canada has produced more than 4,000 custom public opinion research reports since 1994. The reports can be reviewed on Library and Archives Canada's new Web site for these reports at www.porr-rrop.gc.ca, or they can be accessed using an inter-library loan through your departmental library.

The Research Corner presents highlights from selected reports in each of its issues.

Research on Gender, Gender-based Differences and Impact on Smoking Behaviour

Health Canada,
Millward Brown, June 2006

In this qualitative and quantitative study, Health Canada aimed to explore awareness, perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, knowledge and behaviour with respect to gender, gender-based differences and how these impact on smoking behaviour. The study's results contribute to the department's tobacco control programming, from prevention to social marketing and education campaigns to its cessation support programs.

The qualitative study was conducted in February 2006 with 16 focus groups: English in Toronto and Regina and French in Montreal and Moncton. Eight groups were held with current smokers (4 male and 4 female); four groups were with former smokers (2 male and 2 female); and four groups were never smokers (2 male and 2 female). The quantitative phase followed in March-April 2006, by telephone, and included 2,026 interviews with adult Canadians who qualified as current smokers, former smokers or never smokers.

Overall, the data suggested that there are some gender-based differences in attitudes and behaviour towards smoking, with some clear differences among Current and former smokers. In both the qualitative and quantitative research it seemed clear that male and female current smokers are equally interested in quitting smoking, but their motivations seemed different, with women more likely to be influenced by long-term health considerations, while men seemed more likely swayed by short-term or practical considerations such as smoking interfering with their ability to play sports.

Research with Business Executives Regarding the Hiring of Ex-Inmates

Correctional Services Canada,
Phoenix Strategic Perspectives Inc.,
March 2006

Reintegrating ex-inmates into society represents a complex challenge for Correctional Services Canada (CSC) and a study recently completed for the agency indicates that employment is a major factor influencing the success of the reintegration efforts. The three main purposes of this qualitative study were to increase CSC awareness of the issues and concerns of small and medium-size enterprises related to the hiring of ex-inmates, to test related communications materials and general hiring practices.

The study revealed that most executives have not knowingly hired an ex-inmate, but of those who have (whether knowingly or not), the experience was reported as a positive one. However, virtually all executives said they would have some degree of concern about hiring an ex-inmate with the reasons being trust, reliability and the potential impact on the firm's reputation. Participants offered suggestions about what could be done in prisons to prepare ex-inmates to become employable.

The communications materials tested were documents to inform employers about the hiring of ex-inmates and about working in partnership with CSC to employ and train those not yet released. Overall reaction to the first document presented was mixed, with some describing it as straightforward and others viewing it as overly general and lacking in useful information. Reaction to a second document presented was more positive as it provided the information and details missing from the first document.

In general hiring practices, skills-related issues top the list of challenges that business executives face when hiring new employees. They identified numerous skill sets that they seek in new employees and most said that they have trouble finding employees with these skills and traits, which is a big problem.

Overfishing and International Fisheries and Oceans Governance

Department of Fisheries
and Oceans Canada,
Environics, August 2006

This quantitative survey of 2,036 Canadians 18 years of age and over was conducted in June 2006 tracking data drawn from a survey with 2,022 Canadians 18 years of age or older conducted in June-July, 2005. The survey results can be considered accurate to within plus or minus 2.2%, 19 times out of twenty.

There was a marked decline this year in awareness of actions taken by Canada to stop overfishing or illegal fishing in international waters close to Canada's 200-mile zone, down to 28%, 18 percent lower than last year. Awareness is highest in Atlantic Canada and lowest in British Columbia. Reported awareness is relatively consistent across most demographic groups but older Canadians have a greater awareness than younger Canadians.

The overwhelming majority of Canadians continue to think it is important for Canada to take the steps necessary to stop overfishing and illegal fishing in international waters, but there was a slight reduction in the intensity of opinion. Older Canadians and those with higher levels of education and income are most inclined to think taking steps to stop overfishing is very important.

The majority of Canadians continue to place the importance of the fish stocks above that of the health of the fishing industry.

Final Reports, Please!

Hundreds of reports are deposited with Library and Archives Canada (LAC) and the Library of Parliament each year. This ensures that research findings are shared across departments and with the public. Please deposit your final reports using the LAC Web site www.porr-rrop.gc.ca, as soon as they are complete.



ON THE SHELVES

Library and Archives Canada is the repository for all custom research reports completed by the Government of Canada. The reports can

be accessed through the Library and Archives Canada

Web site www.porr-rrop.gc.ca, or copies can be requested using an inter-library loan through your departmental library. These are useful resources for the Government of Canada research community. Below is a sample of the reports.

- *Qualitative Conceptual and Usability Testing of Information Products for Newcomers to Canada* (Citizenship & Immigration, March 2006)
- *Cross Canada Shipper – Supply Chain Awareness Focus Group* (Transport Canada, April 2006)
- *2006 RCMP Core Performance Surveys* (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, April 2006)
- *Communications Concept Testing: Travellers' Biosecurity Campaign* (Canadian Food Inspection Agency, March 2006)
- *Community Partnerships in Support of Offender Reintegration Study* (Correctional Services of Canada, March 2006)
- *Help Your Child Stay Smoke-Free: A Guide to Protecting Your Child Against Tobacco Use* (Health Canada, March 2006)
- *National Research Council: Brand and Communications Research* (National Research Council Canada, March 2006)
- *Canadian Space Agency Publications Study: Research Related to CSA Infocards* (Canadian Space Agency, March 2006)
- *Focus Groups on Issues Surrounding Child Care* (Social Development Canada, May 2006)
- *Canadians' Opinions on Radio Interoperability* (Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada, August 2005)
- *Immigrant Labour Market Information Needs and Satisfaction Focus Groups* (Human Resources & Skills Development Canada, May 2006)
- *Tracking Public Perceptions Surrounding Money Laundering* (Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada, June 2006)
- *Perceptions and Usability of My Service Canada Account* (Human Resources & Skills Development Canada, April 2006)
- *Avian Influenza Tracking Survey* (Health Canada, March 2006)
- *Revisiting the Privacy Landscape a Year Later* (Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, March 2006)
- *Onsite and Website Concept Development – Focus Group Report* (Library and Archives Canada, August 2005)
- *Canadians Perceptions of Parks Canada 2005 – Release I – National Findings* (Parks Canada, June 2006)
- *Public Opinion About the Canadian Honours and Awards System* (Office of the Governor General's Secretary, July 2006)
- *Universal Child Care Benefit Advertising Research* (Social Development Canada, August 2006)
- *Overfishing and International Fisheries and Oceans Governance* (Fisheries & Oceans Canada, August 2006)
- *Public Awareness and Perception of the Biosphere* (Environment Canada, December 2005)
- *Perceptions and Understanding of Aboriginals and Aboriginal issues among Residents of the Abitibi-Témiscamingue, Mauricie, Outaouais and Lanaudière regions* (Indian & Northern Affairs Canada, March 2006)

DID YOU KNOW?

The Research Information Management System (RIMS) has almost 200 registered users across government who rely on this on-line system for everything from submitting their POR projects to PORD, to finding studies already completed or partners for upcoming studies, to reporting on their POR activities.

If you would like to register as a RIMS user, please contact Stephanie Charette at 613-995-9837 or Stephanie.charette@pwgsc.gc.ca.

For an Orientation to RIMS session, please speak with your POR Advisor in PORD, or contact Anne Mendel at 613-943-2976 or anne.mendel@pwgsc.gc.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