

Ballot Redesign Focus Groups

Final Report

Prepared for:
Elections Canada

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Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français.

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Executive Summary

Phoenix Strategic Perspectives (Phoenix SPI) was commissioned by Elections Canada (EC) to conduct qualitative research¹ to assess ballot design characteristics. Research findings will support the design of a new ballot for future electoral events.

The research included a set of six focus groups and 11 in-person in-depth interviews conducted among eligible electors (Canadian citizens aged 18 and older) from the following four categories:

- The general population;
- Persons with physical disabilities;
- Persons with visual disabilities; and
- Persons with cognitive disabilities.

Research was conducted in Montreal (French) and Toronto (English). In each city, three focus groups of 90 minutes each were conducted, one with members from each of the following audiences: general public, persons with physical disabilities, and persons with visual disabilities. In-depth interviews were conducted with persons with cognitive disabilities (six in Montreal, and five in Toronto) and lasted approximately 45 minutes each. The research was conducted May 22-25, 2018.

The design characteristics tested included the size of the ballot, the use of dashes or dots, degrees of shading for contrast, and the use of capitals only for candidate surnames. These characteristics were assessed by focus group participants for ease of handling, clarity, and/or readability (as appropriate).

Preferences for Characteristics of Ballots

Size of Ballots: There was near-unanimity that the larger size of the proposed ballot made the ballot easier to use. The most frequently given reason to explain why was that the larger font size makes it easier to read the ballot, something particularly emphasized by persons with a visual disability.

Dots and Dashes: Asked whether dots or dashes are better at making the ballot easy to understand, almost everyone expressed a preference for dashes. In explaining why participants routinely said that dashes draw attention to the text whereas dots are ‘distracting’ or ‘disorienting’, making it more difficult to focus on the names of candidates and political parties.

Shading and Contrast: When it came to preferences regarding shading and contrast, views were divided. Those who preferred black masking most often said that the contrast in colours makes it easier to focus on the text. Those who preferred grey masking tended to explain that it is easier on their eyes and that it makes it easier to focus on the names of the candidates and political parties. Among those who preferred grey, there was no agreement on the shade; while most preferred 50 percent masking, others preferred 30 percent masking.

¹ This research was qualitative in nature, not quantitative. As such, the results provide an indication of participants’ views about the issues explored, but they cannot be generalized to the full population of members of the general public or members of the targeted audience segments.

Candidate Surname in all Capital Letters: When it came to the formatting of surnames that traditionally contain more than one capital letter (e.g., MacDonald), most participants expressed a preference for the uniform upper case version. For the fictional candidate surname ‘MacAlhaneY’ presented in the ballots tested, participants favoured ‘MACALHANEY’ rather than ‘MacALHANEY’ because they preferred consistency in script size. Those who preferred the lower case lettering, ‘MacALHANEY’, explained that it reflects the correct spelling of the name.

Stronger Preferences from Disability Groups: With one exception, members of the general population were less likely than members of the disability groups to express strong preferences regarding the design characteristics of the ballots. The exception concerned the use of dots versus dashes around the names of the candidates and political parties. On this characteristic, participants from all the targeted audience segments expressed a strong preference for dashes over the dots.

Other Changes to be Considered for Improving the Ballot

When it came to any additional changes Elections Canada could make to the design of the ballot to make it easier to complete, the following suggestions were routinely offered by participants:

- Make the voting circle section stand out clearly on the ballot by, for example, including a different-coloured border/frame, using a pure white circle against a pure black background, or moving it closer to the names of the candidates.
- Increase the font size for the names of political parties.
- Use uniform upper case lettering for candidates’ names.
- Include party logos beside candidates’ names.
- Improve the contrast between the black text and white background.
- Include fewer dashes or dots.

Suggestions offered with less frequency include:

- Do not have party names that are similar to each other next to each other—for example, ‘conservative’ and ‘communist’.
- Include a continuous line instead of dashes around participants’ names and the names of political parties.
- Use a heavier weight of paper to make the ballot easier to hold.
- Include pre-formed folds in the ballot to make it easier to fold.
- Remove the dashes or dots entirely.
- Include party colours.

Additional Information

Contract value:

The contract value was \$78,831.06 (including HST).

Statement of Political Neutrality:

I hereby certify as a Senior Officer of Phoenix Strategic Perspectives that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the *Communications Policy* of the Government of Canada and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research. Specifically, the deliverables do not contain any reference to electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leader.



Alethea Woods
President
Phoenix Strategic Perspectives Inc.

Introduction

Elections Canada (EC) is modernizing the production and printing of the ballot for operational reasons. The Agency is using this modernization process as an opportunity to consider design changes that improve the accessibility of the ballot. As a result, EC commissioned Phoenix SPI to conduct qualitative research in support of these efforts.

All design changes being considered conform to the *Canada Elections Act* and maintain current security features. Changes being considered for the next federal general election are:

- Ballots that are two inches wider and larger font for the candidate and political party name;
- Use of dashes rather than dots;
- Different degrees of shading; and
- Use of capitals only for candidate surnames.

Qualitative public opinion research was conducted to explore the impacts that the various changes may have on electors – including those with visual, physical and cognitive disabilities. The specific objective of this research was to gather opinions on the ease of handling, clarity and readability of the ballots as follows:

- *Ease of handling*: Ballots that are two inches wider might cause problems for some electors while handling and casting a vote, such as while trying to fold the ballot in the prescribed manner.
- *Clarity*: Changes to the ballot may make it difficult for some electors to understand how to cast their votes correctly, such as lighter dots not adequately filling in white space beside a candidate's name.
- *Readability*: Changes to the ballot may make it difficult for some electors to read names of candidates and political parties correctly, such as a distracting contrast in colour when masking and dots are lightened.

The Agency intends to use the research findings to choose a ballot design for future electoral events that supports the accessibility of voting for Canadian electors, including those with physical, visual and cognitive disabilities. The Agency would like to pilot test the new ballot during a fall 2018 by-election.

Methodology

To meet the objectives, a set of six focus groups and 11 in-person in-depth interview²s was conducted with eligible electors (Canadian citizens aged 18 and older) from the following four categories:

- The general population;
- Persons with physical disabilities;
- Persons with visual disabilities; and
- Persons with cognitive disabilities.

The research was conducted in French in Montreal and in English in Toronto.

Research Specifications

In each city, one focus group was conducted with each of three audiences: the general public, persons with physical disabilities, and persons with visual disabilities. Groups lasted approximately 90 minutes. In each group, there was a mix by age, gender and education. Turnout was positive, with between seven and 10 participants attending each focus group session.

In addition to the focus groups, six in-person interviews were conducted with persons with cognitive disabilities in Montreal, and five interviews were conducted in Toronto. These interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes.

The research was conducted May 22-25, 2018. In total, 63 individuals participated in this research. Members of the general public were paid an honorarium of \$100 and members of the disability groups each received an honorarium of \$150.³ The recruitment screener use can be found in Annex 1, and a description of the characteristics of the research participants can be found in Annex 2.

The moderators for this study were Alethea Woods and Philippe Azzie. Alethea moderated the groups and conducted the interviews in Toronto, which were held in English. Philippe moderated the groups and conducted the interviews in Montreal, which were held in French. Both contributed to the final report.

²This research was qualitative in nature and, as such, the results provide an indication of participants' views about the issues explored, but they cannot be generalized to the full population of members of the general public and disability groups.

³The higher incentive amount for participants with disabilities acknowledges the possibility that these individuals may incur additional costs in order to attend the research sessions, such as transportation for themselves.

Ballots Tested with Participants

Eight ballots were used to test different design elements. The table below shows the key design characteristics of the eight ballots. Images of the ballots can be found in Annex 3.

Table 1: Ballot Designs Tested

Ballot Number	Surnames all CAPS	Shading								
		Masking (%)			Dots (%)			Dashes (%)		
		100	50	30	100	50	30	100	50	30
<i>Ballot 1</i>	✓	✓			✓					
<i>Ballot 2</i>		✓			✓					
<i>Ballot 3</i>	✓		✓		✓					
<i>Ballot 4</i>	✓		✓			✓				
<i>Ballot 5</i>	✓	✓						✓		
<i>Ballot 6</i>	✓			✓				✓		
<i>Ballot 7</i>	✓			✓						✓
<i>Ballot 8</i>	✓		✓					✓		

Procedure for Reviewing Ballots

In each focus group and interview, participants were asked to review each of the eight ballots identified in Table 1. The ballots were presented in two separate sets of four ballots. Ballots in Set 1 included ballots 1-4 and ballots in Set 2 included ballots 5-8. The main distinguishing feature between the two sets of ballots was that ballots in Set 1 contained dots and ballots in Set 2 contained dashes. The focus group and interview guides can be found in Annex 1.

The following procedure was followed for the presentation of ballots:

- The order of the sets (dots: ballots 1-4; dashes: ballots 5-8) was rotated across focus groups and interviews so that one group/interview started by reviewing Set 1 and the subsequent group/interview started by reviewing Set 2.
- For the first ballot reviewed in each group/interview (i.e., ballot 1 or ballot 5 depending on the set presented first), participants were asked to complete the ballot as though they were casting their vote. Specifically, they were given a folded ballot, asked to select one of the fictional candidates on the ballot by placing an X in the circle opposite the candidates' name, then asked to refold the ballot and place it in front of them.
- Following discussion of the first ballot, participants were asked to review successively the three other ballots in each set. Participants with a visual disability were asked to complete each of these ballots by choosing a fictional candidate while other participants were asked simply to review these ballots without completing them.

- After reviewing the ballots in the first set, participants were asked which version of the four designs made the ballot easiest to read and use – with a focus on the specific design characteristics that make up the ballots.
- Following this, the same procedure was followed for the second set.⁴

⁴ The only difference in the review of ballots in the second set was that participants were asked to complete the first ballot in the set without folding it.

Detailed Findings

Feedback on Current Ballot

Before being shown the ballots with the new design characteristics, participants were shown an example of the ballot currently used for voting in federal elections.

Widespread familiarity with current federal ballot

Most participants, including a majority in each focus group, indicated that they were familiar with the ballot.

Features of current ballot noticed by participants

The following specific features of the current ballot elicited comments from participants:

- *Candidates' names and names of political parties:* Comments on these features included the following:
 - Candidates' names and political parties are in different font sizes.
 - Candidates are identified first by their surname.
 - Candidates' surnames are in upper case format.
 - The font size is too small. Comments about the font size being too small were most likely to be made by participants with a visual disability.
- *Black text on white background:* Some participants said that the contrast between the black text and white background is not stark enough. These tended to be participants with a visual disability.
- *Black dots:* The inclusion of black dots routinely elicited critical feedback and questions. Critical feedback tended to focus on the perception that the dots are distracting and interfere with the capacity to read the text while questions focused on the purpose or reason for including them. Some observed that the number of dots surrounding the names of candidates and political parties varies, with a few suggesting that names surrounded by more dots tend to be emphasized more than those with fewer dots.⁵ Comments about the dots being distracting were most likely to be made by participants with a visual disability.
- *White circle in which to register one's choice:* Comments about the latter focused on the size of the circle, with some describing it as large and others suggesting that it is not large enough. Impressions that it is not large enough were made by persons with a physical disability, visual disability, and cognitive disability.

While no one commented on the actual size of the existing ballot when asked what they notice about the ballot, it was observed that the font size and the white circles should be larger (see suggestions below).

⁵ The implication was that these candidates might be more visible on the ballot than other candidates.

Suggestions for improving current ballot

Participants offered a variety of suggestions for improving the current ballot used for voting in federal elections. The following were routinely mentioned by participants:

- Remove the black dots (suggested especially by persons with a visual disability).
- Increase the font size (suggested especially by persons with a visual disability).
- Use bold font.
- Improve the contrast between the black text and white background (suggested especially by persons with a visual disability).
- Add party logos.

In addition, the following suggestions were offered, but with less frequency than the previous suggestions:

- Increase the font size of the names of the political parties so that they are uniform with the candidates' names.⁶
- Add pictures of candidates.
- Add political party colours.
- Include text in braille.
- Identify candidates by first name followed by surname.
- Use uniform text for candidates' names (i.e., both names in all capital letters or both in title case only).
- Use heavier paper.
- Make the ballot larger in size.
- Provide an option to mark the ballot on left side.

There also were a few suggestions for improving the voting experience, but they were not related directly to the ballot.⁷

Preferences for Characteristics of Ballots

This section reports on findings related to preferences in terms of ballot design characteristics identified by participants. This includes perceptions regarding ballot size, preferences in terms of the use of dots or dashes, preferences in terms of shading/contrast, and preferences regarding the use of capital letters in candidate surnames.

With one exception, members of the general population were less likely than members of other groups to express strong preferences regarding the characteristics of ballots presented to them. The exception (i.e., the characteristic on which they did express a strong preference) concerned the use of dots versus dashes, where dashes were strongly preferred.

Note that detailed information about the feedback received on each of the ballot designs used for focus groups and interviews can be found in Annex 4.

⁶ Participants observed that the font size of the party affiliations is smaller than the font size of the candidates' names.

⁷ These include placing pictures of candidates in the voting booth, securing the ballot to a clip board in order to hold it in place, and instituting electronic voting (like at the municipal level in Canada) or online voting.

1. Size of Ballot

Virtually everyone felt the larger ballot constitutes an improvement

There was near-unanimity that the size of the proposed ballot will make the ballot easier to use. The most frequently given reason was that the larger font size makes it easier to read the ballot, something particularly emphasized by persons with a visual disability. It was also often suggested that the larger ballot will be easier to manipulate, hold in place, and fold. This was something that tended to be emphasized by persons with a physical disability. Participants who did not think that the larger ballot would be easier to use tended to be members of the general public who saw no real need for a larger ballot. All participants, regardless of their opinion, said that they would be able to fill out and submit the ballot on their own.

2. Dots and Dashes

Near unanimous preference for dashes over dots

Asked whether dots or dashes are better in terms of making the ballot easy to understand, almost everyone expressed a preference for dashes. This is not surprising given that participants routinely commented critically on the use of dots during their review of both the current ballot used at the federal level and Set 1 of the ballots tested. The inclusion of dots was described as ‘distracting’ or ‘disorienting’, resulting in difficulty focussing on names of candidates and political parties. This point was most likely to be made or emphasized by persons with a visual disability and persons with a cognitive disability.

In explaining their preference for dashes over dots, participants tended to focus on the same theme—dashes draw attention to the text (i.e., to the candidates’ names and party affiliations) whereas dots draw attention to themselves. In short, the use of dashes was seen as making it easier to focus on the text. Related to this, it was often suggested that the use of dashes seems to highlight the text by giving the ballot a ‘lighter’, more aerated or ‘airy’ look. By contrast, the use of dots tends to give the ballot a ‘heavy’, ‘more compressed’ or ‘busy’ appearance that ‘crowds’ the text. Finally, some participants said they prefer dashes to dots because dashes seem more ‘professional’ and therefore more appropriate on a ballot than dots.

The few participants who preferred dots to dashes explained that dots make it easier for them to focus on the text. One participant expressed indifference, observing that shading is the more important consideration, and that as long as a lighter shading is used, the inclusion of dots or dashes does not matter.

3. Shading and Contrast

Divided views re: shading and contrast preferences

When it came to preferences regarding shading and contrast, participants made it clear that the overriding factor is a combination that makes it easy to focus on the text. So, while participants tended to have general preferences in terms of shading, it was the combination of elements that mattered.

Generally-speaking, the main difference in terms of preferences was between those who preferred the ‘traditional’ black masking and those who preferred a lighter grey masking. Those who preferred black masking explained their preference by saying that the contrast in colours makes it easier to focus on the text. Many also suggested that the use of black is more ‘professional’ or ‘official’ looking, sometimes noting that shades of grey make the ballot look washed out or give the appearance that it is a ‘photocopy’ or a draft version of a ballot. Participants who preferred grey masking tended to explain that it is easier on their eyes and that it makes it easier to focus on the names of the candidates and political parties. That said, there was no agreement on the shade of grey. Most participants preferred 50 percent masking, while others expressed a preference for 30 percent masking.

General preferences for the shading of the masking notwithstanding, three other things are noteworthy. One is that many participants emphasized the importance of a crisp contrast between the black text of the candidates’ names and political affiliations and the white background on which this text is set. It was often suggested that the white background looks ‘cloudy’ or ‘murky’ and should be purer in order for the black text to stand out clearly. The second is that, regardless of whether the ballot incorporates dots or dashes, it was often noted that the shading of these elements should not impede the reading of the text (i.e., it should be easy to focus on and read the names of candidates and political parties). The third is that the combinations of design characteristics most likely to be preferred were those in which the shading of the masking matches the shading of the dots or dashes.

There were some participants who expressed a preference for combinations in which the shading of the masking and the shading of the dots or dashes do not match. This includes the following:

- Among some participants with a visual disability, a preference was expressed for 100 percent masking with 30 percent dashes or 50 percent masking with 100 percent dashes.
- One participant with a cognitive disability suggested 30 percent masking with 100 percent dashes.
- Among some participants with a physical disability, a preference was expressed for 50 percent masking with 30 percent dashes.

These combinations were thought to make the names of the candidates and the parties clear and distinct, and therefore easier to read.

4. Candidate Surname in all Capital Letters

Widespread preference for uppercase lettering in candidate surnames

When it came to the formatting of surnames that traditionally contain more than one capital letter (e.g., MacDonald), most participants expressed a preference for the uniform upper case version. For the fictional candidate surname ‘MacAlhane’ presented in the ballots tested, participants favoured ‘MACALHANEY’ rather than ‘MacALHANEY’ because they preferred consistency in the size of script. Those who preferred the lower case lettering, ‘MacALHANEY’, explained that it reflects the correct spelling of the name.

Other Changes to be Considered for Improving the Ballot

Participants were given an opportunity to identify any other changes Elections Canada could make to the design of the ballot to make it easier to complete. In some instances, participants re-iterated suggestions made earlier to improve the current ballot. To avoid repetition, the focus here is on suggestions not previously offered by participants when commenting on the current ballot. The following suggestions were made with some frequency.

- Make the voting circle section stand out clearly on the ballot—for example, include a different-coloured border/frame to make it stand out or use a pure white for the circle against a pure black background.
- Use uniform upper case lettering for candidates' first name and surname.
- Include fewer dashes or dots if possible.

In addition, other suggestions were offered with less frequency and include:

- Do not have party names that are similar to each other next to each other—for example, 'conservative' and 'communist'.
- Include pre-formed folds in the ballot to make it easier to fold.
- Move the white circle closer to the names of the candidates.
- Include a continuous line instead of dashes around participants' names and the names of political parties.

Appendix

Annex 1: Research Instruments

Recruitment Screener

1: General Population

INTRODUCTION: Hello/Bonjour, my name is [INSERT]. I'm calling from Decision Point Research, a Canadian research company. We're organizing a series of discussion groups on behalf of the Government of Canada with people in your area.

Would you prefer to continue in English or French? / Préférez-vous continuer en français ou en anglais?

[RECRUITER NOTE: FOR ENGLISH GROUPS, IF PARTICIPANT WOULD PREFER TO CONTINUE IN FRENCH, PLEASE RESPOND WITH, "Malheureusement, nous recherchons des gens qui parlent anglais pour participer à ces groupes de discussion. Nous vous remercions de votre intérêt." FOR FRENCH GROUP, IF PARTICIPANT WOULD PREFER TO CONTINUE IN ENGLISH, PLEASE RESPOND WITH, "Unfortunately, we are looking for people who speak French to participate in this discussion group. We thank you for your interest."]

The groups will last one and a half hours and people who take part will receive a cash gift to thank them for their time. Participation is completely voluntary. We are interested in your opinions. No attempt will be made to sell you anything or change your point of view. The format is a "round table" discussion led by a research professional with up to 10 participants. All opinions will remain anonymous and will be used for research purposes only in accordance with laws designed to protect your privacy.

[RECRUITER NOTE: IF ASKED ABOUT PRIVACY LAWS, SAY: "The information collected through the research is subject to the provisions of the *Privacy Act*, legislation of the Government of Canada, and to the provisions of relevant provincial privacy legislation."]

Would you be interested in taking part in this study?

Yes	CONTINUE
No	THANK/DISCONTINUE

Before we invite you to attend, I need to ask you a few questions to ensure that we get a good mix of participants. This will take 5 minutes. May I continue?

Yes	CONTINUE
No	THANK/DISCONTINUE

Record gender by observation. [50/50 SPLIT]

Female
Male

6. When did you last attend one of these discussion groups or interviews? [DO NOT READ LIST UNLESS HELPFUL; RECORD RESPONSE]

Within the last 6 months	THANK/TERMINATE
6 months to under 2 years	CONTINUE
2 or more years	GO TO Q8

7. Thinking about the groups or interviews that you have taken part in, what were the main topics discussed?

RECORD: _____
THANK/TERMINATE IF RELATED TO VOTING/ELECTIONS

8. How many discussion groups have you attended in the past 5 years?

Fewer than 5	
5 or more	THANK/DISCONTINUE

9. Participants will be asked to look at some items, write out short comments and voice their opinions in front of others. Do you feel comfortable doing this?

Yes	CONTINUE
No	THANK/TERMINATE

10. The discussion group will be audio/video-recorded. These recordings are used to help with analyzing the findings and writing the report. The results from the discussions will be grouped together in the research report, which means that individuals will not be identified in any way. Neither your name nor your specific comments will appear in the research report. Is this acceptable?

Yes	CONTINUE
No	THANK/DISCONTINUE

11. There may be some people from the Government of Canada who have been involved in this project observing the session. They will not take part in the discussion and they will not know your name. Is this acceptable?

Yes	CONTINUE
No	THANK/DISCONTINUE

[GO TO B: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE]

a research professional with up to eight participants. All opinions will remain anonymous and will be used for research purposes only in accordance with laws designed to protect your privacy.

[INTERVIEW] The interview will be conducted in person and it will last up to 45 minutes. People who take part will receive a cash gift to thank them for their time. Participation is completely voluntary. We are interested in your opinions. No attempt will be made to sell you anything or change your point of view. All opinions will remain anonymous and will be used for research purposes only in accordance with laws designed to protect your privacy.

Would you be interested in taking part in this study?

Yes	CONTINUE
No	THANK/DISCONTINUE

[RECRUITER NOTE: IF ASKED ABOUT PRIVACY LAWS, SAY: “The information collected through the research is subject to the provisions of the *Privacy Act*, legislation of the Government of Canada, and to the provisions of relevant provincial privacy legislation.”]

3. Before we invite you to attend, I need to ask you a few questions to ensure that we get a good mix of participants. This will take 5 minutes. May I continue?

Yes	CONTINUE
No	THANK/DISCONTINUE

4. Record gender by observation. [GET MIX]

Female
Male

5. Do you, or a member of your household or immediate family, work in any of the following fields? [READ LIST]

Marketing research, public relations firm, or advertising agency
The media (i.e., radio, television, newspapers, magazines, etc.)
A federal or provincial government department or agency
A political party

Yes	THANK/DISCONTINUE
No	CONTINUE

[RECRUITER NOTE: WHEN TERMINATING A CALL WITH SOMEONE, SAY: *Thank you for your cooperation. We already have enough participants who have a similar profile to yours, so we are unable to invite you to participate.*]

[ASK THOSE WITH A PHYSICAL DISABILITY]

6. What is the nature of your physical disability? [RECORD SPECIFIC DISABILITY AND THEN CODE DISABILITY TYPE]

Disability: _____

DO NOT READ:

Mobility/agility disability

Acquired brain injury

Cerebral palsy

Cystic fibrosis/CF

Multiple sclerosis/MS

Muscular dystrophy

Spinal injury/spina bifida

Other [GO TO Q7 IF UNSURE OF ELIGIBILITY]

[ASK IF UNSURE OF ELIGIBILITY]

7. Does this disability make it difficult for you to walk, use stairs, use your hands or fingers, or do other types of physical activities?

Yes

CONTINUE

No

ASK Q12 THEN THANK/DISCONTINUE

[ASK THOSE WITH A VISUAL DISABILITY]

8. How would you describe your level of visual impairment? [READ LIST]

Partially-sighted

CONTINUE

Low-vision

CONTINUE

Legally blind

ASK Q12 THEN THANK/DISCONTINUE

Totally blind

ASK Q12 THEN THANK/DISCONTINUE

9. Do you use text-to-speech assistive technology* on a personal device? [GET MIX]

Yes

No

[*RECRUITER NOTE: THIS MAY BE A PEN-LIKE DEVICE THAT SCANS AND READS ALOUD TEXT, OR AN APP THAT IS USED ON A MOBILE DEVICE FOR THE SAME PURPOSE.]

[ASK THOSE WITH A COGNITIVE DISABILITY]

10. What is the nature of your cognitive disability? [RECORD SPECIFIC DISABILITY AND THEN CODE DISABILITY TYPE]

Disability: _____

DO NOT READ:

Autism

Dementia

Developmental delay

Disability due to head/brain trauma

Down syndrome

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder

Fragile X syndrome

Learning disability

Prader Willi syndrome

Other [GO TO Q11 IF UNSURE OF ELIGIBILITY]

[ASK IF UNSURE OF ELIGIBILITY]

11. Does this disability make it difficult for to learn, remember or concentrate?

Yes

CONTINUE

No

ASK Q12 THEN THANK/DISCONTINUE

12. We have been asked to speak to participants from all different ages. May I have your age please? RECORD: _____. [GET MIX]

Under 18

THANK/DISCONTINUE

18 to 24 years

25 to 34 years

35 to 44 years

45 to 54 years

55 to 64 years

65 to 74 years

75+ years

THANK/DISCONTINUE

13. Have you ever voted in a municipal, provincial or federal election? [GET MIX]

Yes

No

14. Could you please tell me what is the last level of education that you completed? [GET MIX]

Some high school

Completed high school

Some college/technical school/CEGEP

Graduated college/technical school/CEGEP

Some university

Graduated university

Graduate studies

B. Invitation to Participate

I would like to invite you to [FOCUS GROUPS: attend the focus group session where you will exchange your opinions in a moderated discussion with other Canadians from your community / INTERVIEWS: participate in an interview]. The [FOCUS GROUPS: discussion will be led by a researcher from the public opinion research firm, Phoenix SPI / INTERVIEWS: interview will be conducted by a researcher from the public opinion firm, Phoenix SPI]. The [group / interview] will take place on [DAY OF WEEK], [DATE], at [TIME] at [FACILITY]. It will last [FOCUS GROUPS: an hour and a half [90 minutes] / INTERVIEWS: up to 45 minutes] and we ask that you arrive 15 minutes early. People who attend will receive [ADJUST BASED ON AUDIENCE: \$100 / \$150] to thank them for their time. [PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES: The facility where the discussion is being held is fully accessible for persons with disabilities.]

Would you be willing to attend?

Yes

No

THANK/DISCONTINUE

May I have your email address so that we can also send you an email message with the address where the group will be held?

Yes: ENTER EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

No: That's fine. Do you have a pen handy so that I can give you the address where the group will be held? It will be held at [INSERT FACILITY ADDRESS] at [TIME] on [DATE].

At the facility, you will be asked to produce photo identification, so please remember to bring something with you (for example, a driver's license). If you use glasses to read, please remember to bring them with you. Participants will be asked to review some materials in [ENGLISH/FRENCH] during the discussion.

As I mentioned, the session will be audio/video recorded for research purposes and representatives of the Government of Canada research team will be observing from an adjoining room. You will be asked to sign a waiver to acknowledge that you will be video recorded during the session. The recordings will be used only by the Phoenix SPI research team and will not be shared with others. All information collected in the group discussion will remain anonymous and be used for research purposes only in accordance with laws designed to protect your privacy.

As we are only inviting a small number of people to attend, your participation is very important to us. If for some reason you are unable to attend, please call us so that we can get someone to replace you. You can reach us at [INSERT NUMBER] at our office. Please ask for [INSERT NAME].

Someone will call you the day before to remind you about the session. So that we can call you to remind you about the focus group or contact you should there be any changes, can you please confirm your name and contact information for me?

First name: _____
Last Name: _____
Daytime phone number: _____
Evening phone number: _____

Focus Group Guide

Introduction (5 minutes)

- Introduce moderator/firm and welcome participants to the focus group.
 - Thanks for attending/value your being here.
 - Tonight, we're conducting research on behalf of Elections Canada. Elections Canada is an independent, non-partisan agency that reports directly to Parliament. Elections Canada exercises general direction and supervision over the conduct of elections and referendums at the federal level.
 - We're looking for your opinion on potential design features for new ballots.
 - The discussion will last up to 1.5 hours.
 - If you have a cell phone or other electronic device, please turn it off.
- Describe focus group.
 - A discussion group is a "round table" discussion.
 - My job is to facilitate the discussion, keeping us on topic and on time.
 - Your job is to offer your opinions.
 - There are no right or wrong answers. This is not a knowledge test.
 - Everyone's opinion is important and should be respected.
- Explanations.
 - Your comments will be treated in confidence. We do not attribute comments to specific people. Our report summarizes the findings from the groups but does not mention anyone by name. That said, we ask that you do not provide any identifiable information about yourself.
 - Your responses will in no way affect your dealings with the Government of Canada.
 - The session is being audio-video recorded. Recording is for report writing purposes (to verify) feedback. The recordings remain in our possession and will not be released to anyone without your written consent.
 - Observers.
 - There are observers from Elections Canada who will be watching behind the one-way mirror.
 - Purpose: oversee the research process and see your reactions first-hand.
- Any questions?
- Roundtable introduction: Please tell us your first name and something that interests you.

Warm up (5 minutes)

As I mentioned, tonight we'll be talking about the design features of voting ballots.

1. To start, have any of you ever voted in a municipal, provincial or federal election?
HAND COUNT BY JURISDICTION What was your experience voting? KEEP BRIEF

[FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NOT VOTED:]

2. People don't or can't vote for a variety of reasons. Is there any reason in particular you haven't voted? KEEP BRIEF

Review of Ballots (75 minutes)

Elections Canada is considering changes to the paper ballot and would like your feedback on the different design features. Tonight, we'll be asking you to review 8 ballots with different design features that *could* be used for federal elections.

Before we do that, I'm going to show you an example of the paper ballots that are currently used for voting in federal elections. PASS OUT CURRENT BALLOT; ONCE EVERYONE HAS ONE, HOLD UP THE BALLOT AND POINT OUT FEATURES; POINT OUT MAGNIFIERS TO PEOPLE WITH VISUAL DISABILITIES.

3. How many of you are familiar with the ballot?
4. What do you notice about this ballot? What stands out? KEEP BRIEF

Probes if needed:

- Size
- Paper weight
- Capital/lower case letters
- Size of the circle

5. What, if anything, would you suggest to improve the ballot...to make it easier to use? KEEP BRIEF

Now we're going to look at ballots with new design characteristics. Before we do that, please pass back the ballot. COLLECT CURRENT BALLOT.

As I mentioned, we'll look at 8 ballots in total, as two sets of 4 ballots.⁸ Here's the first one. PASS OUT FOLDED BALLOT AND PENCILS. We'll call it 'Ballot 1' [SEE ANNEX]. I'd like you to complete the ballot as though you were casting your vote. This means you need to select one of the fictional candidates on the ballot by placing an X in the circle opposite the candidates' name that you choose. Once you're done, refold the ballot and place it in front of you. When everyone is finished, we'll talk about the ballot as a group. ALLOW UP TO 10 MINUTES FOR THE FIRST BALLOT.

Ok, it looks like everyone is finished.

6. Do you understand the ballot? If not, what is unclear?

⁸ Rotate the order of the sets (dots: ballots 1-4; dashes: ballots 5-8) across the focus groups. One group starts with dots and the next group starts with dashes, etc.

7. What did you first notice about the ballot...that is, what stood out?

Probes:

- Size/width
- Paper weight
- Font (size, type, lower-case, upper case)
- Size of the circle
- Dots
- [PEOPLE WITH VISUAL DISABILITIES]: probe about personal devices as appropriate

8. Is the text clear and easy to see? If not, what is difficult to read or see and why?

Probes:

- Font (size, type, lower-case, upper case)
- Dots
- Shading/lack of contrast

9. Was it easy or difficult to select a candidate by marking the ballot? What was difficult?

Probes for 'difficult':

- Did the ballot move/shift when you were marking your selection?
- Was it hard to read the candidates' names / parties? If so, why?
- [PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES]: Was it hard to mark your selection with an X without going beyond the circle?

10. What about folding the ballot...

- a. was it clear how you are to refold the ballot? If not, what was confusing?
- b. was it easy or difficult to refold the ballot? What was difficult?

11. [IF REFOLDING DIFFICULT] What could be done to make this easier for you?

Let's move to the next ballot in this set. I ask that you push Ballot 1 to the centre of the table. I'll collect these ballots in a minute, but first I'm going to hand out Ballot 2. **PASS OUT BALLOT 2 UNFOLDED.**

[GENERAL PUBLIC AND PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES] Please take a few minutes to examine this ballot, in silence, and then we'll talk about it as a group. **ALLOW UP TO 5 MINUTES FOR REVIEW OF BALLOT.**

[PEOPLE WITH VISUAL DISABILITIES] Please complete the ballot as though you were casting your vote. Once you're done, we'll talk about the ballot as a group. **ALLOW UP TO 5 MINUTES FOR REVIEW OF BALLOT.**

12. What did you first notice about this ballot...that is, what stood out?

Probes:

- Lower case letters [BALLOT 2 ONLY]
- Dots
- Shading/contrast

13. Is the text clear and easy to see? If not, what is difficult to read or see and why?

Probes for 'difficult':

- Font size/type
- Capital letters [DON'T USE FOR BALLOT 2]
- Dots
- Shading/contrast
- [PEOPLE WITH VISUAL DISABILITIES]: probe about personal devices as appropriate

[ONLY ASK PEOPLE WITH VISUAL DISABILITIES]

14. Was it easy or difficult to select a candidate by marking the ballot? What was difficult?

Now let's move to the next ballot. COLLECT PREVIOUS BALLOT. REPEAT FOR BALLOTS 3 AND 4; ALLOW UP TO 5 MINUTES FOR EACH BALLOT. ASK QUESTIONS 12-13 [AND 14 FOR GROUPS WITH PEOPLE WITH VISUAL DISABILITIES].

Now that you've looked at the first 4 ballots... HOLD UP BOARD⁹ WITH BALLOTS 1-4 DISPLAYED AND PASS AROUND TABLE,

15. Which of the four designs makes the ballot easiest to read and use? Why?

Probes:

- Surnames in title case (not all CAPS)
- Shading of masking
 - Ballots 1 + 2 = 100%
 - Ballots 3 + 4 = 50%
- Shading of dots
 - Ballots 1 + 2 + 3 = 100%
 - Ballot 4 = 50%

Now we're going to move to the second set of ballots. ENSURE THE FIRST SET OF BALLOTS IS OFF THE TABLE. Here's Ballot 5, the first ballot in the second set. PASS OUT BALLOT 5 UNFOLDED. I'd like you to complete the ballot as you did with the first ballot in the previous set. When everyone is finished, we'll talk about the ballot as a group. ALLOW UP TO 10 MINUTES FOR THE FIRST BALLOT.

16. Do you understand the ballot? If not, what is unclear?

⁹ Bristol board or poster board with the 4 ballots affixed.

17. What did you first notice about the ballot...that is, what stood out?

Probes:

- Size/width
- Paper weight
- Font (size, type, lower-case, upper case)
- Size of the circle
- Dashes/lines
- [PEOPLE WITH VISUAL DISABILITIES]: probe about personal devices as appropriate

18. Is the text clear and easy to see? If not, what is difficult to read or see and why?

Probes:

- Font (size, type, lower-case, upper case)
- Dashes/lines
- Shading/lack of contrast

19. Was it easy or difficult to select a candidate by marking the ballot? What was difficult?

Probes for 'difficult':

- Did the ballot move/shift when you were marking your selection?
- Was it hard to read the candidates' names / parties? If so, why?
- [PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES]: Was it hard to mark your selection with an X without going beyond the circle?

Let's move to the next ballot in this set. I ask that you push Ballot 5 to the centre of the table. I'll collect these ballots in a minute, but first I'm going to hand out Ballot 6. PASS OUT BALLOT 6 UNFOLDED.

[GENERAL PUBLIC AND PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES] Please take a few minutes to examine this ballot, in silence, and then we'll talk about it as a group. ALLOW UP TO 5 MINUTES FOR REVIEW OF BALLOT.

[PEOPLE WITH VISUAL DISABILITIES] As you did with the other ballots, please complete this one and, when you're done, we'll talk about the ballot as a group. ALLOW UP TO 5 MINUTES FOR REVIEW OF BALLOT.

20. What did you first notice about this ballot...that is, what stood out?

Probes:

- Candidates' names/lettering
- Dashes/lines
- Shading/contrast

21. Is the text clear and easy to see? If not, what is difficult to read or see and why?

Probes for 'difficult':

- Font size
- Capital letters
- Dashes/lines
- Shading/contrast
- [PEOPLE WITH VISUAL DISABILITIES]: probe about personal devices as appropriate

[ONLY ASK PEOPLE WITH VISUAL DISABILITIES]

22. Was it easy or difficult to select a candidate by marking the ballot? What was difficult?

Let's move to the next ballot in this set. COLLECT PREVIOUS BALLOT. REPEAT FOR BALLOTS 7-8; ALLOW UP TO 5 MINUTES FOR REVIEW OF EACH BALLOT. ASK QUESTIONS 20-21 [AND 22 FOR GROUPS WITH PEOPLE WITH VISUAL DISABILITIES].

Now that you've looked at the next 4 ballots... HOLD UP BOARD¹⁰ WITH BALLOTS 5-8 DISPLAYED AND PASS AROUND TABLE,

23. Which of the four designs makes the ballot easiest to read and use? Why?

Probes:

- Shading of masking
 - Ballot 5 = 100%
 - Ballots 6 + 7 = 30%
 - Ballot 8 = 50%
- Shading of dashes
 - Ballots 5 + 6 + 8 = 100%
 - Ballot 7 = 30%

Let's have one last look at the two sets of ballots all together. HOLD UP BOARDS.

24. One of the key differences between the sets of ballots we looked at tonight is the use of dots and dashes. Is one any better than the other in terms of making the ballot easy to understand? Why?

25. And what about the shading of the masking and the contrast with the dots and dashes... Is one any better than the other in terms of making the ballot easy to understand? Why?

26. What about the size of the proposed ballot...does this make the ballot easier to use? Why or why not?

¹⁰ Bristol board or poster board with the 4 ballots affixed.

27. Are there any other changes Elections Canada could make to the design of the ballot to make it easier to complete? MODERATOR: FOCUS TO BE ON THINGS RELATED TO READABILITY, SUCH AS CONTRAST AND DOTS VS. DASHES. REDIRECT PARTICIPANTS IF NECESSARY.

Probe [FOR PEOPLE WITH VISUAL DISABILITIES]:

- Which colours create the best contrast for you?

ONLY ASK Q28 OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES:

28. Do you think you would be able to fill out and submit the ballot on your own? If not, why is that? What could be done? WAIT FOR TOP-OF-MIND FEEDBACK BEFORE PROBING.

Conclusion (5 minutes)

We've covered a lot tonight and I really appreciate you taking the time to come and share your opinions. I'm going to leave the room now to check with the observers to see if there are any last questions for you. When I come back, I'm going to ask whether any of you has last thoughts that you want to give Elections Canada about the discussion topic.

MODERATOR WILL LEAVE THE ROOM AND CHECK WITH OBSERVERS TO SEE IF THERE ARE LAST QUESTIONS.

29. Does anyone have any last thoughts or feedback to share with Elections Canada about the design features of the ballots you looked at today?

Thank you very much for your time. This concludes the discussion group. 1ST AND 2ND GROUP ONLY, ADD: When you leave the room, please don't discuss the topic. Participants for the second group will be in the waiting room.

Interview Guide

Introduction (5 minutes)

- Introduce interviewer/firm.
 - Thank participant for attending.
 - Today, we're conducting research on behalf of Elections Canada. Elections Canada is an independent, non-partisan agency that reports directly to Parliament. Elections Canada exercises general direction and supervision over the conduct of elections and referendums at the federal level.
 - We'd like your opinion on potential design features for new ballots.
 - The interview will last up to 45 minutes.
 - If you have a cell phone or other electronic device, please turn it off.
- Explain interview purpose.
 - Gauge *opinions* about issues/ideas/products
 - Not a knowledge test; no right or wrong answers (interested in opinions)
- Explanations.
 - Your comments will be treated in confidence. We do not attribute comments to specific people. Our report summarizes the findings from the interviews but does not mention anyone by name. That said, we ask that you do not provide any identifiable information about yourself.
 - Your responses will in no way affect your dealings with the Government of Canada.
 - The interview is being audio-video recorded. Recording is for report writing purposes (to verify) feedback. The recordings remain in our possession and will not be released to anyone without your written consent.
 - Observers.
 - There are observers from Elections Canada who will be watching behind the one-way mirror.
 - Purpose: oversee the research process and see your reactions first-hand.
- Any questions?

Warm up (5 minutes)

1. To start, have you ever voted in a municipal, provincial or federal election? If so, how long ago was this? What was your experience voting? KEEP BRIEF

[IF NOT VOTED:]

2. People don't or can't vote for a variety of reasons. What's the main reason you have not voted? KEEP BRIEF

Review of Ballots (35 minutes)

To start, here's an example of the paper ballots that are currently used for voting in federal elections. SHOW CURRENT BALLOT.

3. What do you notice about the ballot? What stands out? KEEP BRIEF

Probes if needed:

- Size
- Paper weight
- Capital/lower case letters
- Size of the circle

4. What, if anything, would you suggest to improve the ballot...to make it easier to use? KEEP BRIEF

Now we're going to look at ballots with new design characteristics. COLLECT CURRENT BALLOT. As I mentioned, we'll look at 8 ballots in total, as two sets of 4 ballots.¹¹ Here's the first one. PASS OUT FOLDED BALLOT 1 AND PENCIL. I'd like you to select one of the fictional candidates on the ballot by placing an X in the circle opposite the candidates' name. Once you're done, refold the ballot. INTERVIEWER: WATCH FOR DIFFICULTIES.

5. Do you understand the ballot? If not, what is unclear?

6. What did you first notice about the ballot...that is, what stood out?

Probes:

- Size/width
- Paper weight
- Font (size, type, lower-case, upper case)
- Size of the circle
- Dots

7. Is the text clear and easy to see? If not, what is difficult to read or see and why?

Probes:

- Font size
- Dots
- Shading/lack of contrast

8. Was it easy or difficult to select a candidate by marking the ballot? What was difficult?

9. What about folding the ballot...

- a. was it clear how to refold the ballot? If not, what was confusing?
- b. was it easy or difficult to do? What was difficult?

¹¹ Rotate the order of the sets (dots: ballots 1-4; dashes: ballots 5-8) across the focus groups. One group starts with dots and the next group starts with dashes, etc.

10. [IF REFOLDING DIFFICULT] What could be done to make this easier for you?

Let's move to the next ballot in this set. COLLECT BALLOT 1 AND PASS OUT BALLOT 2 UNFOLDED. MODERATOR: IF APPROPRIATE, HAVE PARTICIPANT COMPLETE EACH BALLOT; USE YOUR DISCRETION IN TERMS OF TIMING AND BURDEN ON THE PARTICIPANT.

11. What do you first notice about this ballot...that is, what stands out?

Probes:

- Lower case letters [BALLOT 2 ONLY]
- Dots
- Shading/contrast

12. Is the text clear and easy to see? If not, what is difficult to read or see and why?

Probes for 'difficult':

- Font size/type
- Capital letters [DON'T USE FOR BALLOT 2]
- Dots
- Shading/contrast

[IF PARTICIPANT COMPLETES EACH BALLOT]

13. Was it easy or difficult to select a candidate by marking the ballot? What was difficult?

Ok, here's the next ballot. COLLECT PREVIOUS BALLOT. REPEAT FOR BALLOTS 3 AND 4. ASK QUESTIONS 11-13 AS RELEVANT.

Now that you've looked at the first 4 ballots...SHOW BOARD¹² WITH BALLOTS 1-4 DISPLAYED,

14. Which of the four designs makes the ballot easiest to read and use? Why?

Probes:

- Surnames in title case (not all CAPS)
- Shading of masking
 - Ballots 1 + 2 = 100%
 - Ballots 3 + 4 = 50%
- Shading of dots
 - Ballots 1 + 2 + 3 = 100%
 - Ballot 4 = 50%

Now we're going to move to the second set of ballots. Here's Ballot 5, the first ballot in the second set. PASS OUT BALLOT 5 UNFOLDED. I'd like you to complete the ballot as you did with the first ballot in the previous set.

¹² Bristol board or poster board with the 4 ballots affixed.

15. Do you understand the ballot? If not, what is unclear?

16. What did you first notice about the ballot...that is, what stood out?

Probes:

- Size/width
- Paper weight
- Font (size, type, lower-case, upper case)
- Size of the circle
- Dashes/lines

17. Is the text clear and easy to see? If not, what is difficult to read or see and why?

Probes:

- Font (size, type, lower-case, upper case)
- Dashes/lines
- Shading/lack of contrast

18. Was it easy or difficult to select a candidate by marking the ballot? What was difficult?

Probes for 'difficult':

- Did the ballot move/shift when you were marking your selection?
- Was it hard to read the candidates' names / parties? If so, why?

Let's move to the next ballot in this set. COLLECT PREVIOUS BALLOT. PASS OUT BALLOT 6 UNFOLDED. MODERATOR: IF APPROPRIATE, HAVE PARTICIPANT COMPLETE EACH BALLOT; USE YOUR DISCRETION IN TERMS OF TIMING AND BURDEN ON THE PARTICIPANT.

19. What do you first notice about this ballot...that is, what stands out?

Probes:

- Candidates' names/lettering
- Dashes/lines
- Shading/contrast

20. Is the text clear and easy to see? If not, what is difficult to read or see and why?

Probes for 'difficult':

- Font size
- Capital letters
- Dashes/lines
- Shading/contrast

21. Was it easy or difficult to select a candidate by marking the ballot? What was difficult?

Now let's move to the next ballot. COLLECT PREVIOUS BALLOT. REPEAT FOR BALLOTS 7-8. ASK QUESTIONS 19-21 AS RELEVANT.

Now that you've looked at the next 4 ballots... HOLD UP BOARD¹³ WITH BALLOTS 5-8 DISPLAYED,

22. Which of the four designs makes the ballot easiest to read and use? Why?

Probes:

- Shading of masking
 - Ballot 5 = 100%
 - Ballots 6 + 7 = 30%
 - Ballot 8 = 50%
- Shading of dashes
 - Ballots 5 + 6 + 8 = 100%
 - Ballot 7 = 30%

Let's have one last look at the two sets of ballots all together. HOLD UP BOARDS.

23. One of the key differences between the sets of ballots we looked at tonight is the use of dots and dashes. Is one any better than the other in terms of making the ballot easy to understand? Why?

24. And what about the shading of the masking and the contrast with the dots and dashes... Is one any better than the other in terms of making the ballot easy to understand? Why?

25. What about the size of the proposed ballot...does this make the ballot easier to use? Why or why not?

26. Are there any other changes Elections Canada could make to the design of the ballot to make it easier to complete? INTERVIEWER: FOCUS TO BE ON THINGS RELATED TO READABILITY, SUCH AS CONTRAST AND DOTS VS. DASHES. REDIRECT PARTICIPANTS IF NECESSARY.

Conclusion

I really appreciate you taking the time to come and share your opinions. Do you have any last thoughts or feedback to share with the Government of Canada about the proposed ballots?

Thank you very much for your time. This concludes the interview.

¹³ Bristol board or poster board with the 4 ballots affixed.

Annex 2: Characteristics of Participants

The tables below provide characteristics of the research participants by audience.

General Public (18 participants)

City	Gender	Age	Education
Toronto	Male	45 to 54 years	High School
Toronto	Male	25 to 34 years	Graduated university
Toronto	Female	35 to 44 years	Graduated university
Toronto	Female	55 to 64 years	Graduate studies
Toronto	Female	18 to 24 years	Graduated university
Toronto	Female	25 to 34 years	Graduated college
Toronto	Female	45 to 54 years	Graduated college
Toronto	Female	35 to 44 years	High School
Toronto	Male	18 to 24 years	Some college
Montreal	Female	25 to 34 years	Graduated university
Montreal	Male	25 to 34 years	Graduated university
Montreal	Female	25 to 34 years	Some university
Montreal	Female	25 to 34 years	Some college
Montreal	Female	25 to 34 years	Graduated university
Montreal	Male	45 to 54 years	Some college
Montreal	Female	35 to 44 years	Graduated college
Montreal	Male	25 to 34 years	Some college
Montreal	Female	25 to 34 years	Graduated university

Persons with Physical Disabilities (18 participants)

City	Gender	Age	Nature of Disability	Education
Toronto	Female	65 to 74 years	Amputated limbs	Graduated college
Toronto	Female	55 to 64 years	Multiple sclerosis	Graduated university
Toronto	Female	55 to 64 years	Multiple sclerosis	Graduated university
Toronto	Male	35 to 44 years	Spinal injury/spina bifida	Some university
Toronto	Male	25 to 34 years	Mobility/agility disability	Graduated university
Toronto	Male	45 to 54 years	Mobility/agility disability	Graduated university
Toronto	Female	45 to 54 years	Multiple sclerosis	Graduate studies
Toronto	Male	25 to 34 years	Mobility/agility disability	Some high school
Toronto	Female	45 to 54 years	Mobility/agility disability	Graduated college
Toronto	Male	55 to 64 years	Multiple sclerosis	Some college
Montreal	Male	55 to 64 years	Quadriplegic	Master's degree
Montreal	Female	35 to 44 years	Severe arthritis; cannot walk	Completed university
Montreal	Female	35 to 44 years	Quadriplegic	High school diploma
Montreal	Female	55 to 64 years	Born without a left hand	Completed university
Montreal	Female	25 to 34 years	Paraplegic	Cégep

City	Gender	Age	Nature of Disability	Education
Montreal	Female	55 to 64 years	Syringomyelia	Master's degree
Montreal	Male	55 to 64 years	Left hand is 35% functional	Some high school
Montreal	Male	35 to 44 years	Partial quadriplegic	Some university

Persons with Visual Disabilities (16 participants)

Name	Gender	Age	Nature of Disability	Education
Toronto	Female	25 to 34 years	Partially-sighted	Graduated university
Toronto	Female	45 to 54 years	Low-vision	Graduated university
Toronto	Male	65 to 74 years	Partially-sighted	Some university
Toronto	Male	45 to 54 years	Partially-sighted	Graduate studies
Toronto	Female	55 to 64 years	Low-vision	Graduated college
Toronto	Male	35 to 44 years	Partially-sighted	Graduated college
Toronto	Male	55 to 64 years	Low-vision	Some university
Montreal	Female	55 to 64 years	Partially-sighted	Graduated university
Montreal	Male	25 to 34 years	Partially-sighted	Some college
Montreal	Male	45 to 54 years	Partially-sighted	Some high school
Montreal	Male	45 to 54 years	Low vision, blind in one eye	Some high school
Montreal	Female	35 to 44 years	Partially-sighted	Graduated university
Montreal	Male	55 to 64 years	Low-vision, macular degeneration	Some university
Montreal	Male	65 to 74 years	Partially-sighted	Graduated college
Montreal	Female	45 to 54 years	Partially-sighted	Some high school
Montreal	Female	35 to 44 years	Low vision	High school

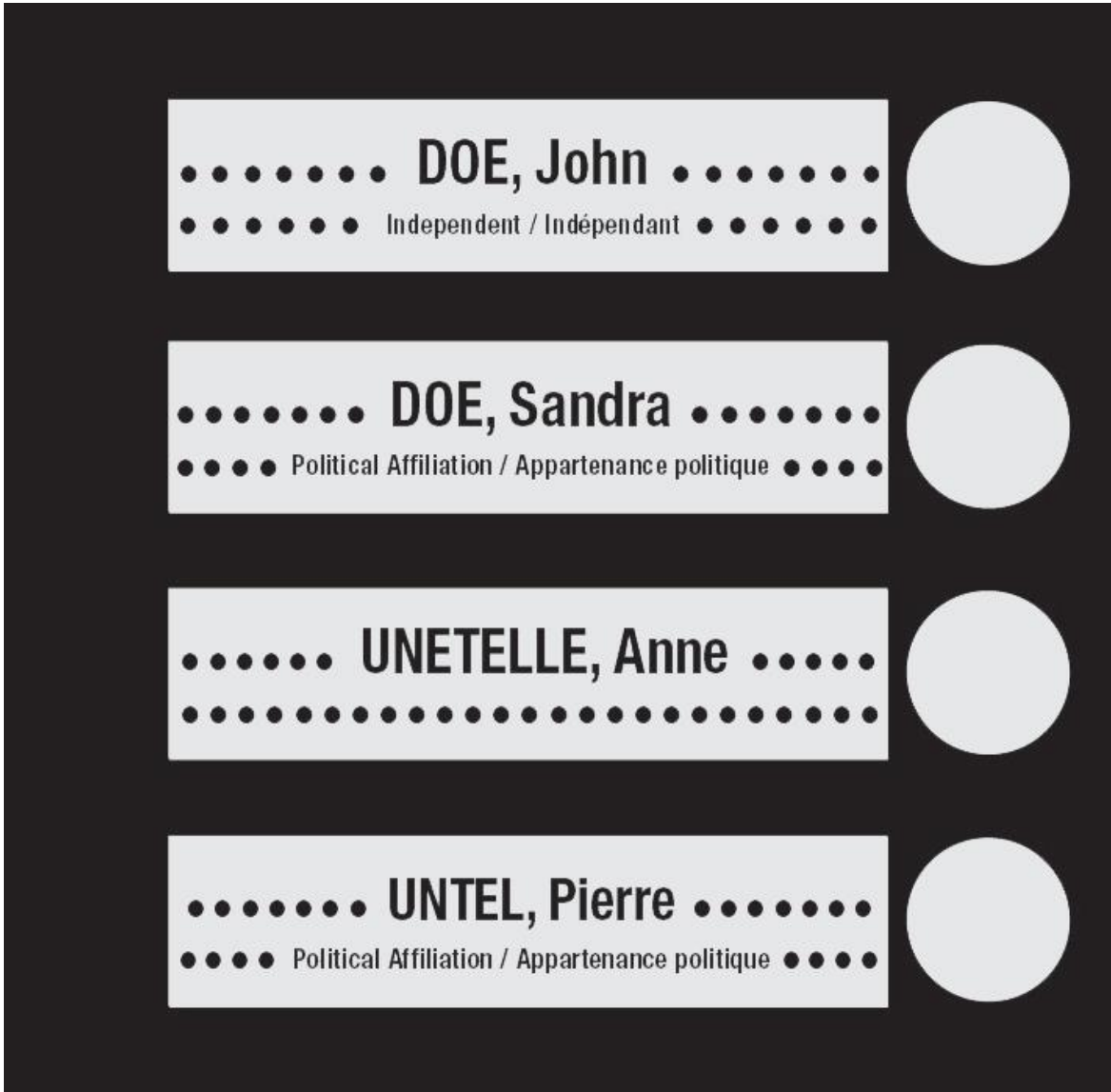
Persons with Cognitive Disabilities (11 participants)

City	Gender	Age	Nature of cognitive disability	Education
Toronto	Female	49	Dementia	Graduated college
Toronto	Male	42	Disability due to head/brain trauma	Graduated college
Toronto	Male	52	Dystonia; does not process information well	High School
Toronto	Male	49	Learning disability	Graduated university
Toronto	Male	23	Autism	High School
Montreal	Female	22	Autism	Graduated college
Montreal	Male	41	Traumatic brain injury	High school
Montreal	Female	33	Developmental delay due to a stroke	Graduated college
Montreal	Male	50	Traumatic brain injury	Some high school
Montreal	Female	51	Traumatic brain injury	Graduate studies
Montreal	Male	32	Disability due to head/brain trauma	Some university

Annex 3: Ballot Designs Used for Focus Groups and Interviews

The ballots that follow are those that were used during the focus groups and interviews in Montreal and Toronto.

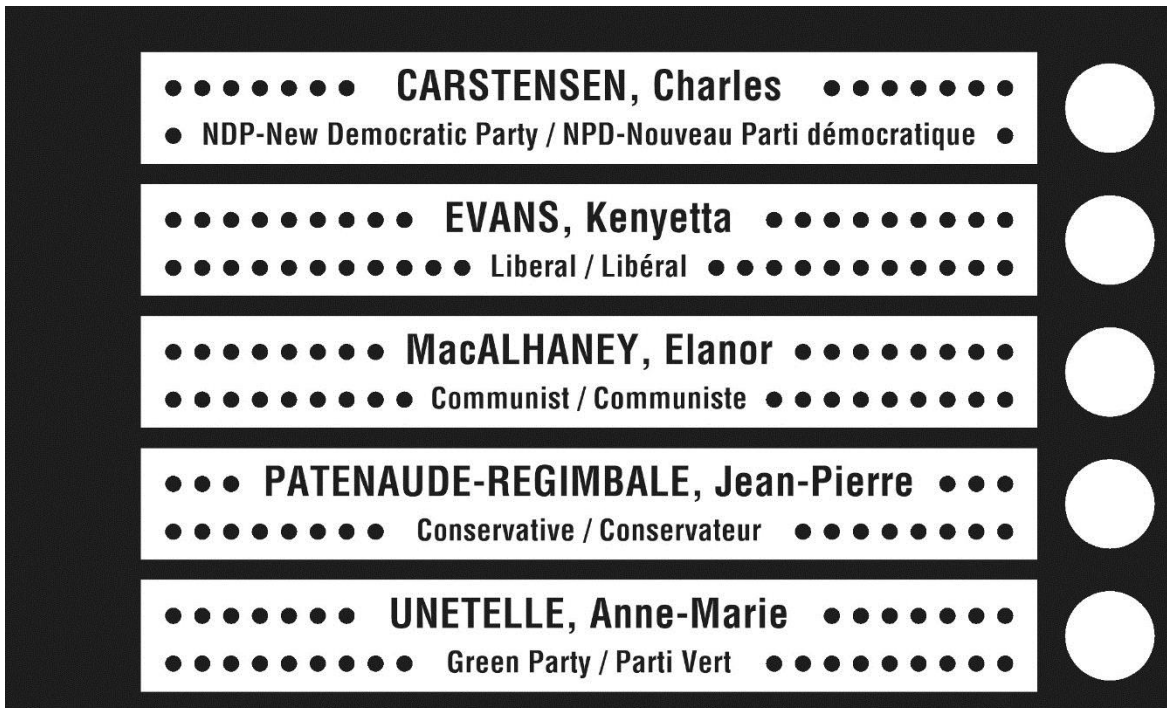
Current Ballot



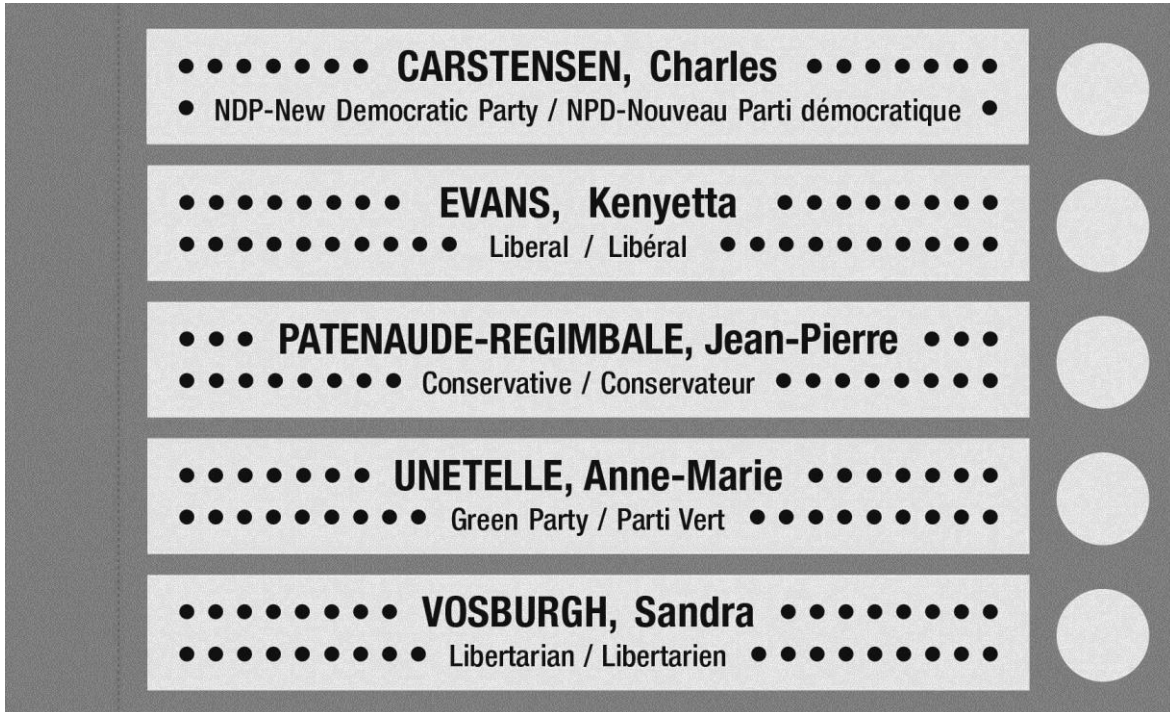
Ballot 1 [masking 100%, dots 100%]



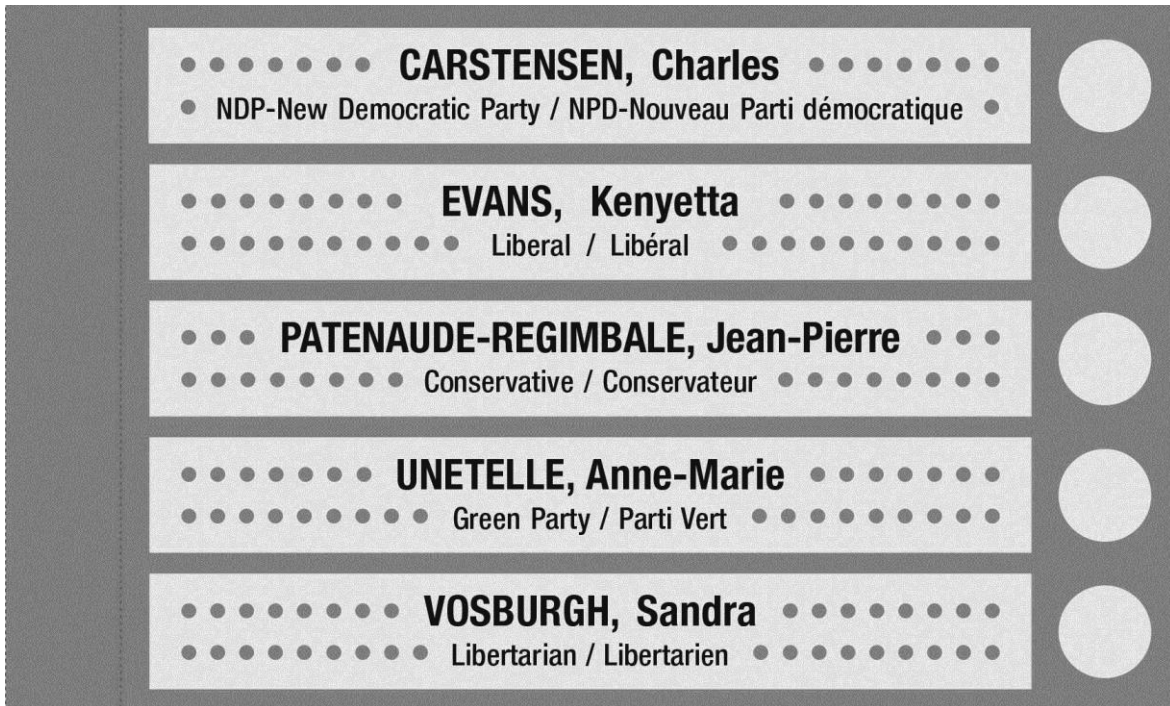
Ballot 2 [masking 100%, dots 100%, candidate surname not all caps]



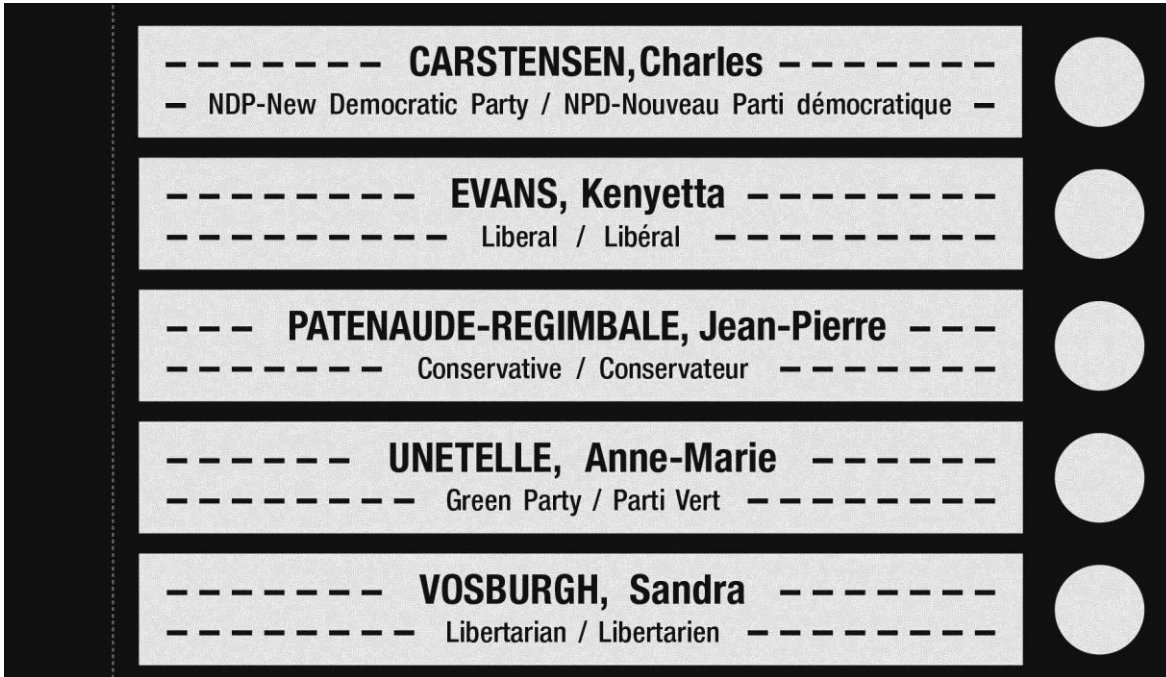
Ballot 3 [masking 50%, dots 100%]



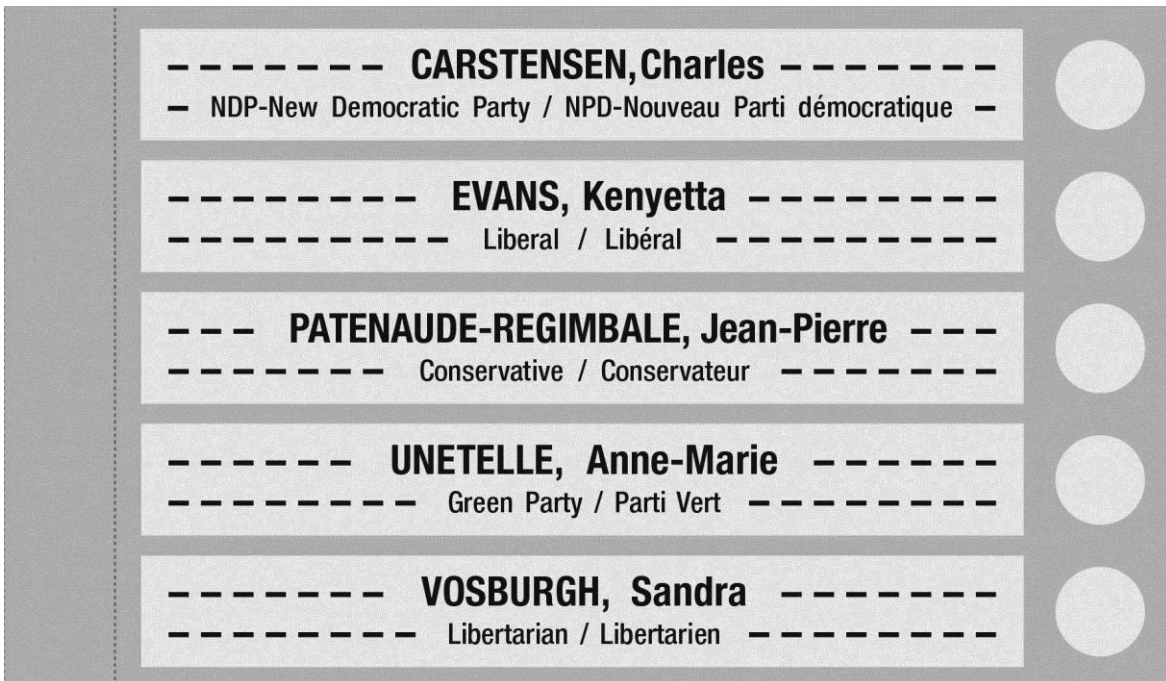
Ballot 4 [masking 50%, dots 50%]



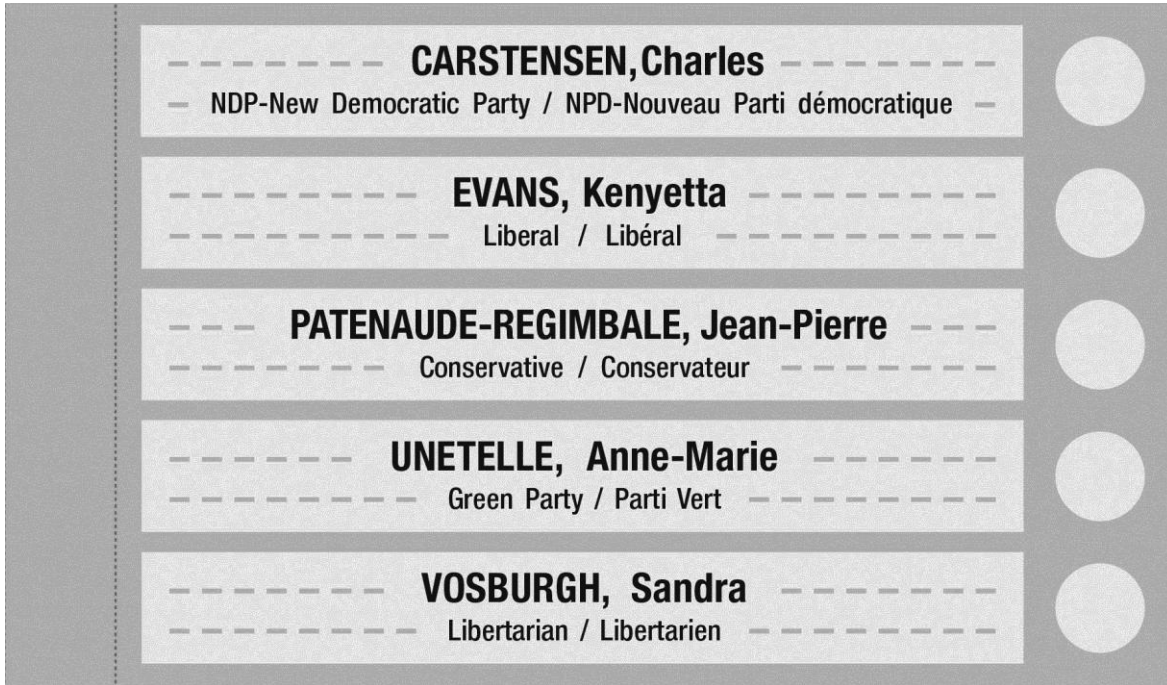
Ballot 5 [masking 100%, dashes 100%]



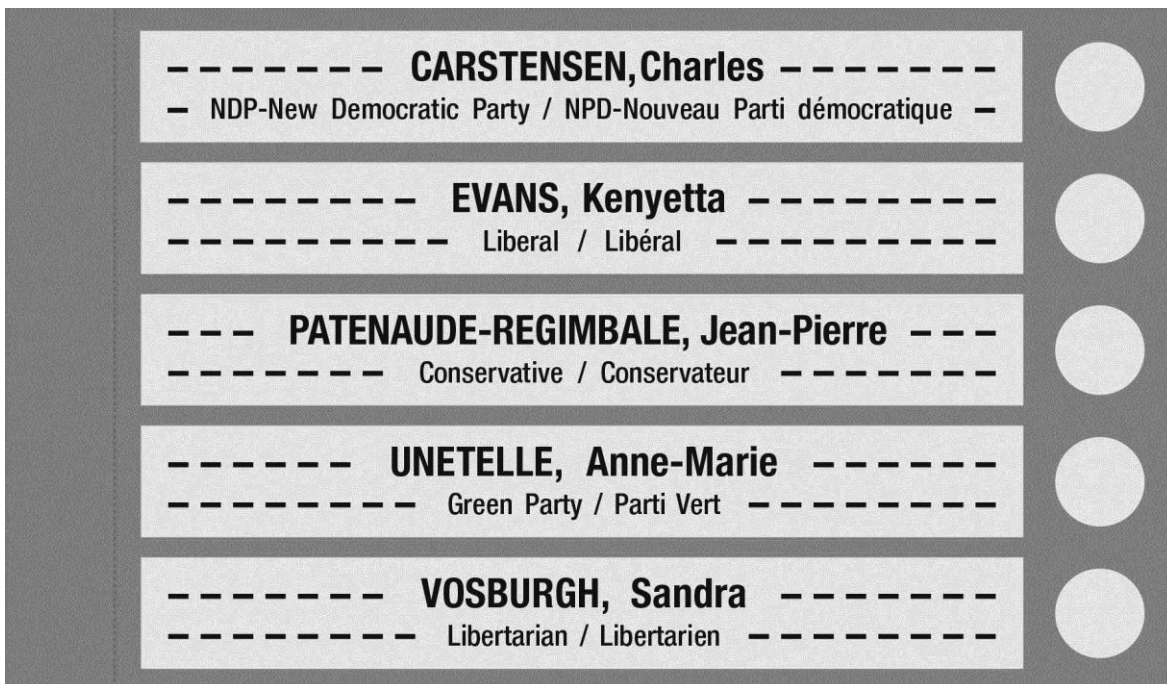
Ballot 6 [masking 30%, dashes 100%]



Ballot 7 [masking 30%, dashes 30%]



Ballot 8 [masking 50%, dashes 100%]



Annex 4: Feedback on Ballot Designs Used for Focus Groups and Interviews

This section reports on participant feedback related to each of the eight ballots. The section begins by reporting on feedback related to the ballots in Set 1 (ballots 1-4), followed by feedback related to the ballots in Set 2 (ballots 5-8).

Ballot 1 [masking 100%; dots 100%]:

Participants had no difficulty understanding this ballot or completing it in those instances when it was the first ballot presented to them. The most frequently noticed feature of this ballot was the black dots, with many adding that the dots are the same colour as the background. The use of dots tended to elicit critical feedback and they were routinely described as distracting or annoying ('agressant' in Montreal). Some also suggested that the use of dots makes the ballot look less serious or less professional, while a few others suggested that names surrounded by more dots tend to be emphasized more and that this might influence the way people vote if they have no clear preference. Beyond this, the most frequently noted feature of this ballot when presented first was that it is larger than the existing ballot, with some adding that it is easier to read.

While the text was routinely described as clear, it was also suggested that the use of dots interferes with the capacity to focus on the text (particularly by persons with a visual disability). Participants who reviewed this ballot after having reviewed Set 2 often suggested that the use of dashes is much better than the use of dots in terms of facilitating a focus on the text.

Participants who identified this ballot as easiest to read and use most often explained that the black and white colour scheme provides a clear contrast that makes it easy to focus on the text. Some suggested that the voting circle in this ballot is crisp and clear, while some others said they like this ballot because it is traditional or what they are used to.

Ballot 2 [masking 100%; dots 100%; candidate surname not all caps]:

The first reaction most often elicited by this ballot was that it is similar to the previous one. Some participants noticed that the only difference between this version and the previous was the use of lower case lettering in the name MacALHANEY, but most did not. When this difference was pointed out, most participants expressed a preference for the uniform upper case version of the name in ballot 1, 'MACALHANEY'. Some, however, favoured the use of lower case lettering in the name—'MacALHANEY'—because they felt this is the correct way to spell the surname.

While feedback on this ballot tended to mirror feedback on ballot 1, some participants were under the impression that there were differences between them. For example, it was suggested that the paper quality was different in this ballot (i.e., more pliable) and that the names of the political parties seem bigger in this version than in the previous one.

Feedback regarding the clarity of the text was similar to that provided for ballot 1. The text was judged to be clear, though persons with a physical disability in Quebec were under the impression that the text is larger and therefore easier to read in this version than in ballot 1.

The few participants who identified this ballot as easiest to read and use provided reasons similar to those provided for ballot 1.

Ballot 3 [masking 50%; dots 100%]:

The most frequently noticed feature of this ballot was the switch in background colour from black to grey, but with the retention of black dots. This combination tended to elicit critical reactions from participants in both Montreal and Toronto. Some participants, particularly those with a visual disability, indicated that there is a lack of contrast that makes it more difficult to see the text, while others said that the black dots are more prominent in this version, the effect of which is that they are even more distracting in this version than the previous two versions. Some also suggested that the shade of grey in this version makes the ballot look less professional. This included impressions that the ballot looks ‘photocopied’, ‘washed-out’ or ‘printed on a copier running out of ink’.

While the text was usually described as clear, participants often suggested that the text is not as clear and distinct as it is in ballots 1 and 2. In addition to the lack of contrast identified above, it was also suggested that the grey background reflects light more than versions with a black background, making the text in the latter versions easier to read. On the other hand, some participants found ballot 3 easier to read than ballots 1 and 2, describing it in general as much easier on their eyes. This includes a participant with myopia and a cognitive disability who finds it easier to focus on the text in this version.

The few participants who identified this ballot as easiest to read and use identified a good contrast as the reason why.

Ballot 4 [masking 50%; dots 50%]:

Participants routinely observed that the dots in this ballot are lighter than in the three previous ballots and feedback on this specific difference tended to be positive. Comments included the impression that this version causes less strain on the eyes (often noted by persons with a visual disability) and the impression that the names stand out better in this version because of the lighter shading of the dots. Some suggested that the text looks bigger and that there seems to be more space between the text and the dots in this version.

The text in this version was routinely described as clear, and most participants with a visual disability described it as the clearest version in the set. This ballot was identified by most participants as the version that is easiest to see and use in Set 1. That said, a couple of persons with a cognitive disability criticized this version. One indicated that the text is harder to see because of a lack of contrast, and the other indicated that the white circle in this version looks smaller than in ballots 1 to 3.

Participants who identified this ballot as easiest to read and use tended to re-iterate their general impressions of this version when explaining why—that is, the impression that the text stands out in this version because of the lighter dots and the impression that the text looks bigger and that there is more space between the text and the dots.

Ballot 5 [masking 100%; dashes 100%]:

Participants had no difficulty understanding this ballot or completing it in those instances when it was the first ballot presented to them. The most frequently noticed feature of this ballot was the use of dashes, particularly if participants began by reviewing Set 1 (i.e., dots). The use of dashes elicited positive feedback, especially by comparison with the use of dots. For example, all persons with a visual disability indicated that they prefer dashes to dots when reviewing this version. Beyond this, the most frequently noted feature of this ballot when presented first was that it is larger than the existing ballot, with some adding that it is easier to read.

There was widespread agreement that the text is clear, with participants often adding that the use of dashes contributes to the clarity of the text by drawing attention to it. As noted above, participants who reviewed Set 1 after Set 2 frequently suggested that the use of dashes is much better than the use of dots in terms of facilitating a focus on the text.

Participants who identified this ballot as easiest to read and use tended to provide reasons similar to those given for ballot 1. This includes the impression that the black and white colour scheme provides a clear contrast that makes it easy to focus on the text and the impression that this version looks traditional (i.e., it is what they are used to). In addition, it was often noted that the dashes tend to draw one's attention to the text. That said, it was suggested by a few participants that the ability to focus on the text is complicated by the fact that the dashes are the same colour as the text and the background (i.e., black).

Ballot 6 [masking 30%; dashes 100%]:

The most frequently noticed feature of this ballot was the switch in masking colour from black to grey, with many also noticing the retention of black dashes. This combination tended to elicit critical reactions in both Montreal and Toronto. Many, including persons with a visual disability, felt that there is a lack of contrast that makes it harder to see the text, with some in Toronto suggesting that the ballot has a 'washed out look'. Some specified that the lack of contrast is due to the fact that the dashes are the same colour as the text resulting in the latter not standing out. In addition, a few participants with a visual disability said that the grey colour hurts their eyes and makes it harder to read the text. Finally, some also suggested that the shade of grey in this version makes the ballot look 'cheaper' or 'less official'. By contrast, a couple participants with a cognitive disability liked this version, one observing that the grey background makes it easier to focus on the text and another observing that the font size looks bigger in this version.

While the text was usually described as clear, a number of participants suggested that the contrast is not as good as in ballot 5.

The few participants who identified this ballot as easiest to read and use identified a good contrast as the reason why (i.e., light background and dark dashes).

Ballot 7 [masking 30%; dashes 30%]:

The most frequently noticed feature of this ballot was the switch from black to light grey dashes, a change that tended to elicit positive feedback because it was seen as drawing attention to the black text and rendering it clear and distinct. It was also observed by some

that the text appears to be bigger in this version (i.e., easier to see) and that the overall effect is easier on their eyes. One participant with a cognitive disability could not detect any difference between this version and ballot 6.

The text in this version was described as clear, and most participants with a visual disability described it as the clearest version in the set. This ballot was identified by most participants as the version in Set 2 that is easiest to see and use.

Participants who identified this ballot as easiest to read and use tended to re-iterate their general impressions of this version when explaining why—that is, the impression that the text stands out in this version because of the lighter dashes and the impression that the text looks bigger.

Ballot 8 [masking 50%; dashes 100%]:

The most frequently noticed feature of this ballot was the darker shade of grey (i.e., compared to ballot 7) and the return to black dashes. Some reacted positively to this version observing that they like the darker shade of grey masking than in ballots 6 and 7 (30 percent shading). Specifically, it was suggested that the white circle is more distinct in ballot 8, that it reflects light less than ballots 6 and 7, which makes it easier to read the text, and that the font size of the text looks bigger. On the other hand, many reacted critically, focussing on the use of dark dashes which was described as enhancing them and thereby making the text less clear and distinct. The latter point was made by a number of participants with a visual disability, especially in Montreal.

While the text was usually described as clear, a number of participants suggested that the contrast is not as good as in ballot 7 and that the text appears to be not as well spaced out as in the previous version.

Participants who identified this ballot as easiest to read and use (including half the persons with a visual disability in Toronto) said they liked the combination of black and grey (including the use of black dashes).