



National Security Information Sharing and Transparency Public Opinion Research

Summary

Prepared for Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada

Supplier: EKOS RESEARCH ASSOCIATES INC.

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This public opinion research report presents the results of an online survey conducted by EKOS Research Associates Inc. on behalf of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada. The research study was conducted with 2,000 Canadians 18 or older between January 19 and February 2, 2021.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre : Recherche sur l'opinion publique sur l'échange d'informations sur la sécurité nationale et la transparence.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Since its creation in 2003, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada (PS) has provided leadership and ensured coordination across federal departments and agencies on national security information sharing and transparency efforts. These efforts serve PS' mandate to keep Canadians secure from threats such as crime and terrorism, and help fulfill its mission to build a safer and more resilient Canada for all. To achieve these goals, PS and its portfolio partners require the trust and confidence of Canadians.

In recent years, the Government of Canada ("Government") has implemented several reform initiatives, including the National Security Act (former Bill C-59), which established stronger accountability and transparency mechanisms while providing Canada's security and intelligence agencies with additional tools to keep pace with developments in the ever-evolving threat environment. PS continues to seek public opinion and input to further its mandate and mission and develop strategies to enhance trust in ongoing national security communications and transparency efforts.

The primary objective of the survey is to better understand Canadians' awareness, knowledge and attitudes surrounding the Government's national security information sharing and transparency frameworks. Specific research objectives include:

- to better understand the general public's level of knowledge and awareness of the Government's national security institutions and their activities, including domestic interagency cooperation to enhance national security;
- to better understand Canadians' awareness of national security issues, including the process and timing of sharing relevant information on national security with the public;
- to determine what type of information Canadians want, or feel they need to know about national security, including their expectations of what should be shared publicly, and any perceived information gaps;
- to assess Canadians' satisfaction with the Government's level of transparency surrounding national security activities, policies, communications and public engagement efforts;

- to assess the level of trust Canadians place in the Government's ability to adequately respond to threats and incidents and to ensure national security, while protecting Canadians' fundamental rights and freedoms; and,
- to inform activities that could be used to communicate with the Canadian public on the above-noted issues.

This research may also help to inform the design and implementation of future public awareness and outreach activities that seek to: improve transparency in areas of national security that matter most to Canadians; increase public trust in the Government's sharing of information on national security; and enhance public confidence in the Government's ability to maintain the safety and security of Canadians while protecting citizens privacy rights. It also serves as a baseline against which to measure future progress following the implementation of awareness and outreach activities.

B. METHODOLOGY

Survey

The primary survey features a sample of 2,000 Canadians, 18 years of age and older. The survey sample was randomly selected from a probability-based panel. The *Probit* panel, which is assembled using a random digit dial (RDD) process for sampling from a blended land-line cell-phone frame, provides full coverage of Canadians with telephone access. The distribution of the panel is meant to mirror the actual population in Canada (as defined by Statistics Canada). As such, our more than 100,000 member panel can be considered representative of the general public in Canada (meaning that the incidence of a given target population within our panel very closely resembles the public at large) and margins of error can be applied. Twenty percent of surveys were collected by trained, bilingual interviewers, while the rest were collected through online survey self-administration.

The survey was collected online and by telephone between January 19 and February 2, 2021 in both official languages. This followed testing to make sure public understanding was clear and consistent. The survey length averaged 15 minutes online and 20 minutes by telephone. The overall rate of participation was 26% (25% online and 33% by telephone). Details on the rate of participation can be found in Appendix A, and the full questionnaire is provided in Appendix B.

This randomly recruited probability sample carries with it a margin of error of +/-2.2%. The margin of error for most sub-groups is between 3.5% and 7.0%. Results are weighted to population proportions for region, age, gender, and education. Chi-square tests were used to

compare subgroups to the remaining sample (e.g., Ontario vs. the rest of Canada; 65 years old and over vs. the rest of Canada; women vs. men). Because of the random nature of the sampling, along with weighting along key dimension, the results can be extrapolated to the broader population of Canadians 18 years of age or older. Characteristics of the sample can be found in Appendix A.

Parallel Survey

A parallel survey was also conducted, through an open-source link circulated by PS with existing stakeholders who in turn shared within their networks. It relied on the same questionnaire as used to collect the general public sample, with slight modifications regarding sample characteristics collected and the additional comment box. The aim was to gather the views of privacy specialists, academics and other national security stakeholders. A total of 95 surveys were completed in this sample. Results of this parallel survey are presented alongside the results for the general public survey in relevant sections. There are too few cases, however, to segment results into further sub-groups. It should be noted that results of the open source link are illustrative in nature, and are only projectable to these 95 individuals, rather than to the broader population.

Interviews

Survey respondents were asked about their willingness to participate in a follow-up interview, conducted by phone, to further discuss their views about sharing and transparency related to information sharing on national security. Interview participants were selected based on survey responses, assigning potential participants into one of four groups: negative perception/attitudes about Government sharing of information/transparency; positive perceptions/attitudes; low self-rated knowledge about national security issues and information sharing, or high knowledge in this regard. This assignment was based on a count of all relevant questions where ratings of 1 or 2 were counted as low knowledge/negative perception or ratings of 4-5 were counted as high knowledge/ positive attitudes. Only respondents with the highest possible count in one of these areas were assigned to one of the four groups. Participants were then selected from these four sub-samples, attempting to select participants from a variety of regions and age segments, as well as fairly even proportion based on gender. All current or previous employees of the Government, or anyone participating in an interview or focus groups for Government public opinion research were excluded from participating.

A total of 21 interviews were conducted, each lasting 20 to 30 minutes. Participants were asked to describe their concerns with national security and sharing of personal information; whether

they feel well informed on issues of national security; and whether they feel the Government is transparent in explaining national security issues to Canadians, as well as their confidence in the Government's ability to respond on national security issues. Interview participants were provided with a \$50 incentive for their time. The interview guide can be found in Appendix C.

Results of the interviews are described in shaded text, along with anonymized, illustrative quotes. It should be noted that the results of the interviews are meant to be qualitative and directional in nature. These results should not be used to estimate a numeric proportions or number of individuals in the population who hold a particular opinion as they are not statistically projectable. That is, results should not be assumed to be representative of the experiences of the wider population of Canada. It is meant to simply add some illustrative experiences and perspectives. For this reason, terms such as "a few", "some", "many" and "most" are used to broadly indicate views, rather than using specific percentages.

C. KEY FINDINGS

Information Sharing

Knowledge of Canadian laws on information sharing is relatively low, with 17% of Canadians rating themselves as knowledgeable about laws that protect personal information and 9% perceiving they are knowledgeable about Canadian laws for sharing information for national security. Four in ten specialists rated themselves as knowledgeable about laws protecting personal information and sharing of information.

Most Canadians have at least moderate confidence in how Canada shares information on national security; however, proportions that have confidence and those that lack confidence are fairly equal for most attributes. One in three Canadians indicate they are confident that the Government shares information responsibly in order to respond to national security threats. A similar proportion are confident that Canada has the tools it needs to share information in order to respond to national security threats; has the ability to effectively respond to national security threats; and that the Government protects the personal information it has in its possession about individual Canadians. One in four are confident that national security review and oversight bodies make the Government more responsible in sharing information to respond to national security threats; although more (one in three) are not confident in this.

Canadians also have a relatively low level of trust in the Government sharing information with other organizations, with just over one in three trusting the Government to lawfully share their personal information for national security reasons within the Government. Only about one in five

trust the Government to lawfully share their personal information with a foreign government or entity or a private or non-governmental organization. Trust is higher among specialists. Among interview participants, some suggested that as long as the Government is transparent in the sharing of personal information, they will continue to trust the Government's sharing of information for national security purposes.

Although one in three Canadians agree that the Government should have greater information sharing powers even if it affects their privacy rights, close to half disagree. Agreement is higher among specialists with half saying the Government should have greater powers. The majority of interview participants do not have concerns with the Government sharing personal information for national security purposes. For these participants, it is reasonable to share personal information, as long as it is done for ethical reasons with other trustworthy sources.

Transparency in National Security

Knowledge among Canadians regarding national security is low. Over half of Canadians surveyed state they are not knowledgeable about what Canada's national security department and agencies do. One in five Canadians perceive themselves to be knowledgeable about what national security threats and issues are facing Canada and Canadians.

Transparency related to national security is important to most Canadians surveyed. Four in five state it is important to them how departments and agencies respect Canadian laws, use their powers and are held accountable. Three in four say transparency is important regarding how national security issues impact Canadians and what the Government is doing to address those issues. Over nine in ten specialists in the parallel survey rated these two areas as important.

Most Canadians feel it is important that the Government provide information to Canadians about issues and threats related to national security areas. At the top of the list is the importance of providing information about pandemics and other health related security issues. Almost as many believe it is important to provide information about cyber, data and telecommunications security; food, water, environment/climate security issues; or foreign interference in democratic processes or institutions. A strong majority (over eight in ten) also rate it as important for the Government to provide information on terrorism and ideologically or religiously-motivated extremism; supply chain, resource shortages or infrastructure; safeguarding innovation or intellectual property, or research and technology. Border security, movement of people and goods was rated as important among just under eight in ten Canadians. Interview participants were concerned about a range of security issues, with some participants mentioning cybersecurity as their greatest concern, in part "because everything is digital and everything is

online now”, along with concern about the vulnerability of their personal information to cyberattacks.

When looking to know more about national security or looking for specific information related to a national security issue, two in three Canadians would most likely rely on Government websites or reports. About half of Canadians agree that publicly available Government information on national security is more trustworthy than information found elsewhere. Interview participants likewise indicated they would trust the information produced by the Government; however, some participants felt that they were not well informed about national security measures and that it is difficult to find information that can be trusted or that is not biased. Further, these participants perceived that the Government does not actively share information with Canadians about national security.

Two in three Canadians feel it is important that Canada’s national security departments and agencies reach out to various organizations, experts, groups or communities, external to government, to obtain their views on national security policies, programs and issues. A similar proportion believe it is important to proactively share information with news media. Over half state it is important for Canada to create opportunities for the Canadian public to share opinions on national security policies, programs and issues, and half think it is important to create interactive educational content online.

In the last three years, about one in four Canadians have visited a Government website or read a Government public report related to national security. Some interview participants felt that the Government could do a better job of informing Canadians on national security matters, including making more information available and producing accessible and understandable information for the general public. Many participants indicate that the Government should reach out to Canadians with information on national security matters, what the government is doing, and where to find more information.

D. NOTE TO READERS

Detailed findings are presented in the sections that follow. Overall results are presented in the main portion of the narrative and are typically supported by graphic or tabular presentation of results. Bulleted text is also used to point out any statistically and substantively significant differences between sub-groups of respondents. If differences are not noted in the report, it can be assumed that they are either not statistically significant¹ in their variation from the overall

¹ Chi-square and standard t-tests were applied as applicable. Differences noted were significant at the 95% level.

result or that the difference was deemed to be substantively too small to be noteworthy. The programmed survey instrument can be found in Appendix A. Details of the methodology and sample characteristics can be found in Appendix B.

Results for the proportion of respondents in the sample who either said “don’t know” or did not provide a response may not be indicated in the graphic representation of the results in all cases, particularly where they are not sizable (e.g., 10% or less). Results may also not total to 100% due to rounding.

E. CONTRACT VALUE

The contract value for the POR project is \$105,231.79 (including HST).

Supplier Name: EKOS Research Associates

PWGSC Contract Number: OD160-212976/001/CY

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To obtain more information on this study, please e-mail:
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F. POLITICAL NEUTRALITY CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify as Senior Officer of EKOS Research Associates Inc. 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 include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.

Signed by:



Susan Galley (Vice President)