

Survey of Candidates Following the 44th General Election

Executive Summary

Prepared for Elections Canada

Supplier Name: Environics Research Group

Contract Number: 005005-201001/001/CY

Contract Value: \$73,394.98 (including HST)

Award Date: March 26, 2021

Delivery Date: April 11, 2022

Registration Number: POR 140-20

For more information on this report, please contact Elections Canada at: rop-por@elections.ca.

Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français.

Survey of Candidates following the 44th General Election Executive Summary

Prepared for Elections Canada by Environics Research Group.

Delivery Date: April 11, 2022

This public opinion research report presents the results of a mixed-mode (telephone and online) survey conducted by Environics Research Group from September 24 to November 18, 2021.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre *Sondage auprès des candidats à la 44e élection générale fédérale*.

Permission to reproduce

This publication may be reproduced for non-commercial purposes only. Prior written permission must be obtained from Elections Canada. For more information on this report, please contact Elections Canada at: rop-por@elections.ca.

Catalogue Number: SE3-111/2022E-PDF

International Standard Book Number (ISBN): 978-0-660-43634-0

© Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, as represented by the Prime Minister of Canada, 2021

Executive Summary

A. Background and Objectives

Elections Canada (EC) identified the need to conduct a quantitative mixed-mode (online and telephone) survey of candidates for the 44th federal general election (GE) held September 20, 2021.

EC sought to learn about candidates' experiences with the electoral process in general and measure their levels of satisfaction with Elections Canada's services during the 44th GE.

The research objectives were to assess candidates' views and satisfaction regarding:

- nomination requirements and other candidate responsibilities
- administration of the election by EC and local returning officer
- EC's services, tools and products for candidates and their campaigns
- policy issues, technology and innovation

This research was conducted as part of the evaluation and development of EC's programs and services for candidates and to inform the CEO's reports to Parliament. The survey results will assist in the evaluation of EC's programs and services, notably by allowing for comparisons over time with previous federal general elections. It will also assist in identifying areas where EC's various products and services may be improved.

B. Methodology

This post-election survey consisted of 1,075 interviews with candidates from a list of 2,010 unduplicated records accounting for all candidates in the 2021 federal election, for a response rate of 53% overall. By mode, 643 respondents completed the survey online (60%) and 432 completed it by telephone (40%).

Attempts were made to invite all candidates in the election to participate in the survey. As an attempted census of the candidate population, there is no margin of sampling error for this study.

To minimize the impacts of non-response as a source of error, the survey results were weighted by candidate age and party, as well as whether the candidate was an incumbent and whether or not they were elected, to reflect the population characteristics of all candidates. More methodological information is provided in Appendix A.

C. Contract Value

The contract value was \$73,394.98 (including HST).

D. Report

This report begins with an executive summary outlining key findings and conclusions, followed by a detailed analysis of the survey data. A detailed set of banner tables presenting the results for all questions for the total candidate population and identified subgroups of interest is provided under separate cover. These tables are referenced by the survey question in the detailed analysis.

In this report, quantitative results are expressed as percentages unless otherwise noted. Results may not add to 100% due to rounding or multiple responses. Net results cited in the text may not exactly match individual results shown in the report figures or tables due to rounding.

E. Key Findings

Overall Satisfaction

Three-quarters of candidates (76%) were satisfied with Election Canada's administration of the 44th general election in 2021, lower than the result from the 43rd general election held in 2019 (85%). Close to nine in 10 (87%) expressed satisfaction with the way the returning officer ran the election in their riding, similar to 2019's result. The small proportion (12%) of candidates who were dissatisfied with their RO to any extent mainly felt that they had not been sufficiently supported.

Nomination Process

Three-quarters of candidates (77%) said it was at least somewhat easy to comply with the nomination requirements, comparable to 2019. Among those (22%) who said it was at least somewhat difficult, the main challenge they had was obtaining signatures (67%, significantly higher than the 39% obtained in 2019).

Close to nine in 10 candidates (89%) said they felt at least somewhat well-informed about the nomination process. Just over half (54%) said it was at least somewhat easy to collect nomination signatures despite COVID-19 restrictions. Relatively few candidates experienced difficulties in finding an official agent (20%) or auditor (13%); difficulties mainly related to finding someone who was willing or available to take on either task. Almost all candidates (94%) were satisfied with the timeliness of the nomination process (unchanged from 2019).

Political Entity Service Centre

Elections Canada introduced an online portal called the Political Entities Service Centre (PESC) for the 2019 election, providing candidates with an electronic means to access election materials and file nomination papers and financial reports. Fewer than half (47%) of candidates in 2019 used the portal, either personally or through an official agent or delegate. Use of the portal increased in 2021: Two-thirds of campaigns (65%) reported using the portal, including four in 10 (41%) candidates who personally used it.

The candidates mainly used the portal to download election materials (60%), also the top use in 2019. Just under four in 10 used it to submit financial returns (37%) or to access election results (35%), and three in 10 used it to maintain account information (31%) or to submit their nomination (29%). Three-quarters (76%) of candidates whose campaign used the portal were satisfied with their overall user experience to some extent, with just under one-quarter (23%) being very satisfied.

The main reason candidates gave for not using the portal was that they did not need to use it (34% of candidates who did not use it).

EC Products and Services for Candidates

Close to nine in 10 candidates (85%) said EC products were at least somewhat useful to their campaign, the same result as in 2019.

Sixty percent (60%) of candidates reported that they used the lists of polling stations. Among them, just under half (48%) reported paper and electronic formats as being equally useful; the rest were more than twice as likely to prefer electronic lists (33%) over paper lists (14%). However, among the 55% of candidates who used the maps of polling place service areas, 69% preferred the paper format of this product.

Among the 50% of candidates who used them, eight in 10 (82%) candidates were satisfied with the quality of the lists of electors. Of the 12% who used EC's tools to communicate with electors, candidates ranked the *Guide to the Federal Election* booklet (37%) and the infographics (36%) as the most useful communication tools.

Three-quarters (74%) of candidates reported they or someone else from their campaign attended an all-candidates briefing for the 44th GE. Just under half of all respondents attended personally (48%, comparable to 47% in 2019), either in person (31%) or via videoconference (17%). Eight in 10 (79%) who attended or were represented at the briefing found it useful; strong majorities attending by either method were satisfied with the in-person (91%) and online (89%) formats. When asked about Elections Canada's COVID-19 procedures and guidelines, two-thirds (65%) of candidates found them to be useful to some extent.

Almost nine in 10 candidates' campaigns (86%) contacted their local EC office during the election period, an identical proportion to 2019. Close to half contacted EC via email (47%), and one-third (32%) used the toll-free support line, statistically lower than the proportion doing so in 2019 (39%). The proportion of candidates satisfied with the services they received is high (eight in 10 or more) regardless of contact method (through the local office—90%; by email—85%; or the toll-free line—79%).

Candidates' Electoral Campaign

Despite the need for pandemic precautions during the 44th GE, seven in 10 (69%) candidates reported that they interacted with electors by going door-to-door, and almost six in 10 (56%) did other in-person events or outreach.

One-quarter (24%) of candidates provided the returning officer with a list of names of election staff to work at polling stations. The majority (55%) did not, with 28% of those candidates stating that they did not have anyone interested or competent to work at the polling stations.

Of those who reported that they used a voters list (68% of the candidates), almost all (96%) took measures to protect the personal information contained in them, usually by limiting access to them (51%) or by securing them (24%). Over four in 10 candidates (44%) took measures to ensure their campaign was accessible to electors with disabilities, most often by using wheelchair-accessible venues (26%).

Just over one-third (37%) were aware of reimbursement incentives when deciding to run as a candidate, but only few of them (8%) say this had a major or moderate impact on them.

Voting and Reporting Process

Seven in 10 candidates (69%) were satisfied with the locations chosen as polling sites for advance polls and election day, including a third (33%) who expressed strong satisfaction. Both of these proportions are lower than in 2019 (when 84% were satisfied, including 44% who were very satisfied). One-quarter were dissatisfied to some extent; this was mainly due to having too few advance polling stations (29%) or their being too far away (27%). Respondents also mentioned they were dissatisfied due to not enough polling stations being available on polling day (26%).

Overall satisfaction with the way the voting process went was close to eight in 10 (78%), comparable to 2019 (81%). The top reasons for dissatisfaction are long line-ups at the advance polls (31%) or on election day (29%) or issues with EC staff (25%). About one in six candidates (16%) said they or their representatives witnessed problems related to the voter identification requirements in general; half saw these at least somewhat often (50%). Slightly over one in 10 (12%) witnessed problems related to use of the VIC as ID; six in 10 of these (62%) saw this happen at least somewhat often. Just under half (48%) agreed it was harder to observe the election because of COVID-19-related safety measures at the polls.

Attitude Toward EC

Three-quarters (76%) of candidates said Elections Canada ran the election fairly, just under what was reported in 2019 (81%). This includes four in 10 candidates (42%) who believe EC ran the election very fairly, 10 percentage points lower than in 2019 (52%). Two in 10 think it was unfair to some extent (20%).

Most respondents (83%) had a very or somewhat high level of trust in the accuracy of the election results, including over half (55%) who had very high trust. These proportions are similar to the level of trust in 2019 (86% overall, 54% with a high level of trust). Just over one in 10 (13%) said they had low or very low trust in the accuracy of election results, similar to 10% in 2019.

Nine in 10 (90%) expressed some level of satisfaction with their interactions with the RO, with three-quarters (73%) being very satisfied. These results are similar to how candidates felt in 2019 (89% overall satisfaction, 70% very satisfied). A strong majority of candidates expressed some satisfaction with the overall quality of Elections Canada's services (86%, similar to 89% in 2019); nearly half (47%) report being very satisfied, unchanged from 2019 (51%).

Close to six in 10 candidates provided at least one suggestion to improve EC services. The top suggestion was for EC to provide more timely or accessible information (12%); across all three elections since 2015, this has been the most prominent suggestion. Fewer than one in 10 made any other individual mentions; these include improving the website or portal, improving communications, simplifying paperwork and additional staff training.

Elections and Technology

Close to six in 10 candidates (56%) felt that the spread of false information online was a problem in this election, lower than the two-thirds (64%) who felt this way in 2019. Overall, two in 10 candidates (21%) thought it had a major impact on the election outcome. The same proportion (22%) thought it had a moderate impact of the election outcome. These proportions are comparable to the proportions of candidates reporting in 2019 that the spread of false information online had a major (19%) or a moderate (22%) impact on the election outcome.

Nearly four in 10 (38%) believed foreign countries or groups using social media or other means to influence political opinions of Canadians was a problem, slightly less than in 2019 (44%). An equally low proportion of candidates (14%) thought it had a major or a moderate impact on this election's outcome. While the proportion of those thinking this issue had a major impact is slightly on the rise compared to 2019 (9%), the proportion of those thinking it has a moderate impact remained stable (15% in 2019).

One in 10 (10%) thought foreign countries or groups hacking into the computer systems that support the election was a problem in this election, similar to the previous GE (8%). Only 4% of candidates thought it had a major impact on the outcome of the election and 3% thought it had a moderate impact.

One-half of candidates were asked for their opinions about technology at the polls: Of these, just over four in 10 (44%) preferred paper voter lists, just under three in 10 (28%) preferred computerized voter lists, and two in 10 (22%) expressed no preference; these proportions are comparable to 2019. The other half of candidates were asked about their preferred ballot counting method: six in 10 (62%) preferred hand-counted ballots, statistically higher than in 2019 (46%). One in six (17%) preferred machine counting, noticeably lower than the three in 10 (31%) seen in the previous election. Approximately the same number of candidates had no preference for how ballots are to be counted (16%), unchanged from 2019.

A minority of just under four in 10 candidates (38%) said electors should be able to vote by using the Internet, comparable to 2019 (35%). A majority (56%) of candidates in 2021 felt voting online is risky, lower than was the case in 2019 (67%). Just three in 10 said voting online is safe (31%, 9 percentage points higher than the 22% seen in 2019).

Attitudes Toward Democracy in Canada

Over half of candidates (55%) are satisfied to some extent with the way democracy works in Canada, a slight increase since 2019 (50%). One-quarter report being *very* satisfied (24%, up from 16% in the 43rd GE). Just over four in 10 (44%) are dissatisfied to some extent, with two in 10 being not at all satisfied (20%).

The top reasons provided by those who were dissatisfied with the way democracy works in Canada were the lack of proportional representation (29%) and that first-past-the-post does not reflect voter preferences (21%). Additional reasons are the belief the system is unfair (17%) or that there is too much media bias or censorship (16%).

F. Political Neutrality Statement and Contact Information

I hereby certify as a senior officer of Environics that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Communications Policy of the Government of Canada and the 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.

Brenda Sharpe
Senior Research Associate, Corporate and Public Affairs
Environics Research Group
brenda.sharpe@environics.ca

Supplier name: Environics Research Group
PWGSC contract number: 005005-201001/001/CY
Original contract date: 2021-03-26
For more information, contact Elections Canada at rop-por@elections.ca