

Survey of Election Officers for the 44th Federal General Election

Final Report

Prepared for Elections Canada

July 2022

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This public opinion research report presents the results of a survey conducted with election officers following the 44th federal general election.

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Executive Summary

Elections Canada (EC) commissioned Phoenix SPI to conduct a survey with election officers following the 44th general election (GE) held on September 20, 2021.

1. Research Purpose and Objectives

Elections Canada, headed by the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), is an independent, non-partisan agency that reports directly to Parliament. The Agency exercises general direction and supervision over the conduct of elections and referendums at the federal level. As part of Elections Canada's evaluation program, the agency conducts a post-election survey with a representative sample of election officers who worked during federal general elections. Like surveys following past general elections, the overall purpose of the survey for the 44th GE was to gather information on election officers' opinions on various election-related issues as well as their working experience during the election. The survey for the 44th GE also included new measures asking election officers for their views on the health and safety of working in the election on account of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Methodology

A 17-minute survey was administered to a stratified random sample of 4,168 election officers between December 10, 2021, and January 14, 2022. Of the 4,168 surveys administered, 2,490 were completed by telephone and 1,678 were completed online. The survey data were weighted to reflect the distribution of election officers by region, type of position, type of poll and type of polling place. Based on a sample of this size, the overall results can be considered accurate to within $\pm 1.5\%$, 19 times out of 20.

3. Summary of Key Findings

Profile of Election Officers

Election officers most often became aware of the opportunity to work at the 2021 federal election through word of mouth from friends, relatives, or colleagues (35%), or because they worked in a previous election (33%). Fewer became aware of the opportunity to work in the federal election through Elections Canada's website (13%) or through being contacted by a Returning Officer or local Elections Canada office (11%).

Approximately 6 in 10 (62%) said they applied for the position through the Elections Canada website. Fewer were asked to work at the polls by someone at the local Elections Canada office (20%) or by submitting their application at a local Elections Canada office (13%). Nearly half (47%) had no previous experience working as an election officer in a federal or provincial election before the 44th GE.

Training and Preparedness

Eighty-six percent (86%) of poll workers were very or somewhat satisfied with the training session they received in advance of working in the 44th GE. Over the last decade, satisfaction with the

training has remained virtually unchanged: 86% in 2008, 83% in 2011, 84% in 2015, and 83% in 2019. Of those not satisfied with the training session, similar proportions pointed to the quality of training (31%), to the staff or trainers themselves (29%), or to their perception that the session did not provide enough information (29%) to explain why they were not satisfied with the training session.

Eighty-five percent (85%) of poll workers who worked at least one of their scheduled shifts said the training they received prepared them somewhat or very well to undertake their tasks during the 44th federal election. The perceived level of preparedness of poll workers decreased slightly (from 88% in 2019 to 85% in 2021) and remained lower than the high of 96% reported in 2015 following the 42nd GE.

Experience Working at the Polls

Nine in 10 (90%) poll workers expressed satisfaction with the way the last federal election went, including 53% who were very satisfied, unchanged from 2019 when 90% of poll workers expressed satisfaction.

Roughly 9 in 10 (87%) poll staff said that the building where they worked was suitable for holding an election. This is a decrease of four percentage points compared with 2019 but a return to the level obtained in 2015. In addition, 86% of central poll supervisors, deputy returning officers, and registration officers said it was easy to register electors, with 53% saying it was very easy. Perceptions of the ease of registering electors have declined slightly since 2019, when 90% of central poll supervisors, deputy returning officers, and registration officers said it was easy.

Most poll workers said the flow of electors at the polls went smoothly, 61% said the flow went very smoothly, and 31% said it went somewhat smoothly. Satisfaction with the flow of electors (93%) is similar to previous federal elections: 94% in 2008, 95% in 2011, 93% in 2015, and 95% in 2019.

Satisfaction with Election Materials

More than 9 in 10 (95%) poll staff reported being satisfied with the election materials that were provided to them, including 63% who were very satisfied. Satisfaction levels are consistent with previous federal elections: 92% were satisfied in 2019, 89% in 2015, and 90% in 2011. In addition, the majority (90%) of poll workers found that the various forms provided were easy to complete, including 47% who found them to be very easy. Ease of completing forms has increased over the past few elections, from 85% in 2015 to 87% in 2019 and now 90% in 2021.

Voter Identification Requirements

Virtually everyone said that the identification of electors at their polling location went well: either somewhat (24%) or very (73%) well. The results are similar to those of 2019, when 99% said it went at least somewhat well. Ninety-six percent (96%) of poll workers said the voter information card (VIC) facilitated the identification of electors.

Poll Workers' Absenteeism

Ninety-five percent (95%) of poll staff reported having worked all their scheduled shifts. Three percent (3%) were absent for all their scheduled shifts, and 2% were absent for at least one of their shifts. Among poll workers who were absent for at least part of one shift, 27% attributed their

absence to a physical illness. This is followed by 15% who said they had a family emergency and 11% who said their shift presented a conflict with their regular job, school, or another responsibility.

Two-thirds (68%) of poll workers who said fellow poll staff were absent for part, or all, of their shifts indicated that absenteeism had no impact (31%) or only a minor impact (37%).

Working Conditions

More than 9 in 10 (93%) poll workers said the working conditions they experienced were good, including 54% who said the conditions were very good. Satisfaction with working conditions is virtually unchanged since 2015 (94% in 2015 and 92% in 2019 versus 93% in 2021). The proportion of poll workers who described the working conditions as very good is the same as in 2019 (54%) but was lower than the level recorded in 2015 (63%).

Eighty-six percent (86%) of poll workers were at least somewhat satisfied with the hourly rate of pay. This represents a modest increase in satisfaction since 2019 and 2015, when 80% and 81%, respectively, were somewhat or very satisfied with their pay.

Impact of COVID-19 Measures

The 44th GE was held during the COVID-19 global pandemic, so additional health and safety measures were implemented at polling places. These included hand sanitizer stations, physical distancing markers, plexiglass barriers at desks, and masks to be worn by all poll staff and by electors coming to vote.

Ninety-six percent (96%) of respondents said they were made aware of the COVID-19 conditions of employment when they were recruited, and the vast majority (97%) felt at least somewhat informed about the COVID-19 safety measures in place when they first went in to work at the poll. Most poll workers were satisfied to some degree with the personal protective equipment provided by Elections Canada (94%); and 95% felt safe with the measures in place for COVID-19 while they were working at the poll, including 64% who said they felt very safe. Relatively few (17%) said the COVID-19 measures made their job difficult.

4. Limitations and Use of Findings

As a probability sample, the survey results are generalizable to the full population of poll workers for the 44th GE. The results will be used to assess the quality of the programs and services provided during the 44th GE. Similar surveys were conducted following the 40th, 41st, 42nd, and 43rd federal GEs.

5. Political Neutrality Certification

I hereby certify, as a senior officer of Phoenix Strategic Perspectives, that the deliverables fully comply with the government of Canada's political neutrality requirements outlined in the Policy on Communications and Federal Identity 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.

Signed:



Alethea Woods, President
Phoenix Strategic Perspectives

6. Contract Value

The contract value was \$78,897.42 including applicable sales tax.