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# RCAF 2024 Centennial – Baseline Study Executive Summary

Prepared for the Department of National Defence Canada

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# RCAF 2024 Centennial – Baseline Study

## Executive Summary

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March 2022

This public opinion research report presents the results of the online survey conducted by Earncliffe Strategy Group on behalf of the Department of National Defence and the Royal Canadian Air Force. The research was conducted from January to February 2022.

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## Executive Summary

Earnscliffe Strategy Group (Earnscliffe) is pleased to present this report to the Department of National Defence (DND) regarding quantitative research undertaken to support planning for the Royal Canadian Air Force's (RCAF) Centennial campaign.

April 1, 2024 marks 100 years of service for the RCAF as an independent entity. This presents a once in a lifetime opportunity to launch a robust Centennial campaign to commemorate this milestone, connect with Canadians and take a forward-look at how the RCAF will continue to serve Canadians for the next 100 years.

An RCAF 2024 campaign will showcase the RCAF as a relevant, responsive and effective air and space power and showcase the past, present and future of our nation's Air Force through contributions to national security, international peace and stability.

This research was required to provide a baseline to help identify Canadian public opinion of the RCAF, specifically to better inform communications planning and evaluate future iterations of campaign success. No formal public opinion research (POR) specific to the RCAF currently exists and results from the Views of the CAF Tracking Study suggest that awareness of the RCAF is low. The aim of this research project was to help the RCAF to better understand public perceptions and attitudes towards the Air Force and inform planning for the 2024 Centennial campaign. The research will also be used to evaluate existing communication activities for the RCAF, inform decision-making, inform communication strategies and messaging, improve communications with Canadians and key audiences, and report on departmental performance.

To meet the research objectives, Earnscliffe conducted an online survey of 3,075 Canadians ages 17 and older using Leger's proprietary opt-in panel. The survey was offered to respondents in English and in French. It was in field from February 2-17, 2022 and the average length of interview was 10 minutes.

The key findings of this research are presented below.

### Key Findings

- Almost three-quarters (73%) say they have seen the RCAF logo before, though only 22% correctly identify the organization it represents.
- The vast majority have at least some level of familiarity with each CAF environment. More say they are very or somewhat familiar with CAF itself (40%) and the Canadian Army (39%) than the RCAF (30%) and the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) (25%).
- On balance, impressions of the RCAF are positive. Over half (55%) have a positive impression while just 6% have a negative opinion.

- Words most often used to describe the RCAF are “Canada/Canadians” (15%), “Airplanes/Aircraft/Aviation” (13%), and “Military/Armed Forces”.
- Two-thirds (67%) have a positive impression of those who serve in the RCAF. Those who do not have a positive impression tend to be more neutral (25%) than negative (4%).
- Over half (60%) agree that the RCAF is essential (4-5 on a 5-point scale) and agree that it is a source of pride for Canadians (57%). Again, those without a positive impression for the most part feel neutral, rather than negative.
- Over half (59%) also feel that the RCAF represents Canadian values. Very few disagree with this idea, while about a third are either neutral or do not offer an opinion.
  - Respondents are a little more uncertain as to whether it shares their values, though the plurality still agree (43%). About half either are neutral (25%) or do not have an opinion (22%).
- Some of the RCAF’s roles are better known among Canadians than others. Over half are aware of the RCAF’s air demonstrations (64%), transportation of troops (62%), supporting NATO operations (59%) and search and rescue (59%).
  - Slightly less than half are aware of the RCAF’s work in aerospace warning and control (47%), transportation of government officials (45%) and maritime aviation (40%).
  - The least well-known role is the use of satellites in space to monitor territory, gather intelligence and identify targets (26%).
- Asked to judge the importance of each role, over two-thirds (69%) agree that search and rescue is a very important role (give it a 5 on a 5-point scale). About half feel aerospace warning and control (56%) and transportation of troops and equipment (50%) are very important.
  - Supporting allies including NATO in overseas operations (44%), maritime aviation (43%) and using satellites in space to monitor territory and gather intelligence (42%) all rank similarly in terms of importance.
  - Transportation of government officials and dignitaries (21%), followed by air demonstrations (17%), are deemed the least important roles.
- All 17- to 34-year-olds who completed the survey were asked about their likelihood of joining each CAF environment. While very few say it is very likely they will join any

environment, over a third expressed some likelihood of joining, including (38%) who would consider joining the RCAF.

- Few say they are very (4%) or somewhat (15%) knowledgeable of opportunities within the RCAF.
- One-in-five (20%) say they are very or somewhat interested in joining the RCAF.
- If they were asked by a family member or friend how appealing a career in the RCAF might be, over half (54%) estimate it would be very or somewhat appealing.
- Over half (59%) would view the decision of a family member or friend to join the RCAF favourably.
- About a two-thirds (65%) agree that there are a wide variety of jobs available in the RCAF. Asked whether they think most jobs in the RCAF are for pilots, responses are more divided. While the plurality (43%) disagree, 24% agree, and a third (33%) either do not offer an opinion or are unsure.
- The vast majority (91%) have some level of familiarity with the Snowbirds, including about a quarter (23%) who say they are very familiar.
  - About half of all respondents have seen the Snowbirds perform in person, while another 20% have seen them perform via video.
  - Impressions of the Snowbirds among those with at least some familiarity are quite positive. Three-quarters (74%) have a strongly positive or somewhat positive opinion.
  - About three-quarters (76%) agree that the Snowbirds are a recognizable symbol of the RCAF. Over two-thirds (71%) agree the Snowbirds are a source of national pride. About half (48%) agree that the Snowbirds are important to them as a Canadian.
- Very few (10%) have heard of the RCAF Centennial anniversary, but almost two-thirds (63%) agree it is important that it be recognized.
- Over half (61%) have a favourable view of the Centennial logo, very few have a negative opinion and two-thirds (67%) agree it is appropriate.
- Reaction to the motto was on balance positive. More than half (56%) have a favourable impression of it. However, slightly more have a neutral view of the motto (32%) than feel the same way about the logo.

- Half (53%) would be interested in learning more about the RCAF. Few follow the RCAF on social media, but a quarter (24%) would be open to learning more about the RCAF through its social media channels.
  - Respondents would also like to learn more about the RCAF on television (32%), through news stories (29%) and on YouTube (21%) and the CAF website (21%).

Research Firm:

Earnscliffe Strategy Group (Earnscliffe)  
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I hereby certify as a representative of Earnscliffe Strategy Group that the final 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:

Date: March 4, 2022



Doug Anderson  
Principal, Earnscliffe