

Survey of electors following the June 19, 2023, by-election in the districts of Winnipeg South Centre, Portage-Lisgar, Oxford, and Notre-Dame-de-Grâce- Westmount and the July 24, 2023, by- election in the district of Calgary Heritage

Executive summary

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

Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français.

Executive Summary

Elections Canada (EC) is an independent, non-partisan agency responsible for conducting Canadian federal general elections, by-elections, and referendums. Phoenix Strategic Perspectives Inc. (Phoenix SPI) conducted a survey of eligible electors on behalf of EC following the federal by-elections held on June 19, 2023, and July 24, 2023. Federal by-elections were held in the ridings of Winnipeg South Centre, Portage-Lisgar, Oxford, and Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Westmount on June 19, and in the riding of Calgary Heritage on July 24. Eligible electors were Canadian citizens, at least 18 years of age on polling day, who were residents of the electoral district (i.e., had an address of ordinary residence in the electoral district) from the first day of the by-election period until election day.

1. Research Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the survey was to obtain reliable survey data to evaluate electors' opinions, attitudes and knowledge of the agency's services and various aspects of their experience. The objectives were to measure electors' opinions on various election-related issues and to assist in evaluating and refining Elections Canada's programs and services to the electorate. The results will be used to assist in evaluating and refining Elections Canada's programs and services to the electorate. They may also be used to help develop the Chief Electoral Officer's reports to Parliament.

2. Summary of Key Findings

Awareness of by-election and knowledge of electoral process

- The vast majority of respondents (92%) said they were aware that a federal by-election took place in their riding, with even greater awareness among electors in the ridings of Oxford (97%) and Portage-Lisgar (96%).
- When asked to identify the current ways to vote in a federal by-election, respondents were aware of the main voting methods, with most (90%) being able to identify voting in person at a polling station on election day, followed by voting at advance polls in person (66%) and voting by mail (50%). A small percentage (11%) had the impression that it is possible to vote online.
- Awareness of voting at advance polls was higher among electors from Calgary-Heritage (73%), Winnipeg South Centre (69%), and Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Westmount (69%) compared with electors from Oxford (58%) and Portage-Lisgar (58%).

Voting option message testing

- In the by-elections, Elections Canada tested alternative ways to describe the main voting options compared to existing messages used in the last general election. In the survey, a split-sample experiment was conducted to compare respondents' impressions of each of the alternative messages versus the existing messages, in terms of whether the meaning of the voting option was clear to respondents, whether they would trust it as a secure and reliable way to vote, and whether it seemed liked an easy or convenient way to vote.
- Large majorities agreed that voting "at your assigned polling station on election day or advance polling days" was clear in what it means (97%), would be trustworthy as a secure

and reliable way to vote (97%), and seemed like an easy or convenient way to vote (94%), in proportions that were at least as favourable as they were for existing messages of voting “on election day” (96%, 95% and 89%, respectively) or “on advance polling days” (94%, 92% and 94%, respectively).

- Fewer than half agreed either strongly or somewhat that the meaning of voting “at the office of the returning officer” (42%) or “by special ballot” (44%) was clear. In contrast, large majorities agreed that they were clear on the meaning of their respective counterpart messages, voting “at a local Elections Canada office” (77%) and voting “by mail” (87%).
- Uncertainty toward the meaning of voting “at the office of the returning officer” and “by special ballot” may have contributed to more negative or unsure impressions about the security and reliability and ease and convenience of these voting methods:
 - Only 62% of respondents agreed that they would trust voting “at the office of the returning officer” as secure and reliable, compared to 91% who agreed that they would trust voting “at a local Elections Canada office.”
 - Only 47% agreed that voting “at the office of the returning officer” seemed like an easy or convenient way to vote, compared to 78% who agreed that voting “at a local Elections Canada office” seemed easy or convenient.
 - Respondents agreed in nearly similar proportions that they would trust voting either “by special ballot” (58%) or “by mail” (63%). However, they were much less likely to agree that voting “by special ballot” seemed like it would be easy or convenient (53%) compared with voting “by mail” (75%).

Voting information and registration

- Nine in 10 (90%) of those who were aware of the federal by-election said they received their voter information card (VIC).
- Nearly three-quarters (73%) of those aware of the federal by-election recalled advertising from Elections Canada about where, when, and how to vote on at least one medium or format. Specifically, approximately one-third recalled advertising on the radio or an audio platform (34%), while nearly three in 10 recalled advertising on social media (28%) or while browsing the internet or using a mobile application (28%). Approximately one-quarter of respondents remembered encountering EC advertising when reading a local newspaper (24%). Nearly one-third (31%) recalled seeing or hearing advertisements from EC in other formats.
- Most surveyed electors (93%) felt informed about how, when, and where to vote for the June 19, 2023, and July 24, 2023, federal by-elections, with 75% saying they felt very informed. Electors from each riding were similarly likely to feel informed about the by-election held in their riding.

Voter participation

- Three-quarters (74%) of electors who were aware of the by-election held in their riding reported voting in it¹. Electors from Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Westmount (66%) and Calgary-

¹ Self-reported voter turnout is historically overreported in public opinion surveys. In this survey, self-reported turnout was 74%, while the turnout rate across all by-elections among registered electors was 36%. Two factors may be responsible for the overrepresentation of voters: 1) people who vote may be more likely than non-voters to participate in a study about voting (response bias), and 2) people who did not vote may report that they voted to present themselves in a more positive light (social desirability bias).

Heritage (69%) were less likely to say they voted than electors from the ridings of Winnipeg South Centre (77%), Portage-Lisgar (77%), and Oxford (79%).

- Among respondents who did not vote in the by-election, the most common reasons for not doing so were everyday life and health reasons (43%). Nearly three in 10 (28%) chose not to vote in the by-election due to political reasons and ten percent (10%) indicated an issue with the electoral process.
- Six in 10 (61%) electors who said they voted in the by-election reported doing so at a polling station on election day, while just over one-third (36%) reported going to an advance polling station to vote. Very few reported voting at a local Elections Canada office (2%) or by mail (1%). Voters in the riding of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Westmount (42%) were more likely than those from the ridings of Oxford (32%) and Portage-Lisgar (33%) to have gone to an advance polling station to vote in the by-election.

Polling place experience

- Among those who voted on election day, about one-quarter reported voting in the morning (from the opening of the polls until noon, 23%) or in the afternoon (between noon and 4 p.m., 24%). Nearly half (49%) said that they voted in the evening (from 4 p.m. until the closing of the polls), while a small percentage (3%) could not recall the specific time they voted.
- Among those who voted at an advance polling station, three in 10 reported doing so in the morning (from the opening of the polls until noon, 30%) or in the evening (from 4 p.m. until the closing of the polls, 30%). Just over one-third (35%) reported voting in the afternoon (between noon and 4 p.m.), while six percent could not recall what time it was when they went to vote.
- Among those who voted in person, six in 10 (60%) said it took five minutes or less to travel to the polling station, advance polling station, or local Elections Canada office, while nearly three in 10 (28%) said it took between six and 10 minutes. Almost all voters (98%) said the distance to the polling station from their home was at least somewhat reasonable, with 88% saying the distance was very reasonable.
- Nearly everyone (99%) who voted at a polling station, advance polling station, or local Elections Canada office said the building where they voted was at least somewhat suitable, with 85% saying it was very suitable.
- Nearly two-thirds of those who voted in the by-election said voting took them five minutes or less (65%), with most of the rest saying it took them between six and 15 minutes (30%). Four percent reported taking more than 15 minutes to vote.
- When asked if they felt the amount of time it took to vote was reasonable, nearly all voters (97%) noted that the time it took was reasonable.

Voter identification

- Nine in 10 (89%) of those who received their VIC and voted in person brought it with them to the polling place, which would help facilitate their identification when voting. Voters in the riding of Calgary-Heritage (79%) were the least likely to have brought their VIC to vote. In contrast, at least nine in 10 voters in the other ridings reported bringing their VIC: Winnipeg South Centre (93%), Oxford (92%), Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Westmount (91%), and Portage-Lisgar (90%).

- Virtually everyone who said they voted (99%) found it easy to meet the identification requirements, with 95% saying it was very easy.

Satisfaction with voting experience

- The vast majority (96%) of respondents who voted in the by-election said the paper ballot was at least somewhat easy to complete, including 88% who said it was very easy. Voters from Winnipeg South Centre were less likely than voters in the other ridings to have found the ballot easy to complete (83% compared with a range of 98% to 99% in the other electoral districts). In Winnipeg South Centre, there was a total of 48 candidates in the by-election, which required Elections Canada to use a modified large-format ballot paper with two columns of candidate names.
- Among those who found it difficult to complete the ballot (of whom 79% came from Winnipeg South Centre), 71% attributed this to the list of candidates being too long or having difficulty finding their choice of candidate on the list; 13% mentioned the ballot paper being too large to handle or difficult to fold.
- Nearly everyone (98%) who said they voted in the by-election found it at least somewhat easy to vote, with over nine in 10 (92%) saying it was very easy.
- Virtually everyone (98%) who said they voted in the by-election were at least somewhat satisfied with the services provided by Elections Canada staff, with 92% saying they were very satisfied.
- Ninety-eight percent of respondents who said they voted in the by-election were at least somewhat satisfied with their overall voting experience, including more than eight in 10 (86%) who were very satisfied.

Fairness of the by-election and trust in the results

- More than eight in 10 respondents (84%) thought that Elections Canada ran the by-election fairly, including 64% who said they thought it was run very fairly.
- More than nine in 10 (93%) said they had trust in the accuracy of the election results in their riding. Over two-thirds (68%) expressed very high trust.

3. Methodology

A random digit dial (RDD) telephone survey was conducted with 2,012 eligible electors, approximately 400 in each electoral district. The data collection took place in two waves: June 20 to July 12, 2023 (following the June 19 by-elections), and July 25 to August 8, 2023 (following the July 24 by-election). An overlapping dual-frame (landline and wireless) sample was used to minimize coverage error. Those who declined to participate in the survey when contacted by telephone were offered the option of completing the survey through an online self-administered questionnaire. Eighty-nine (n=89) electors completed the survey online; the rest did so over the telephone. Based on a sample of this size, the overall results would have a maximum margin of error of $\pm 2.2\%$, 19 times out of 20. The results for each electoral district would have a maximum margin of error of $\pm 4.9\%$, 19 times out of 20. Maximum margins of error for subsamples would be larger. For a more complete description of the methodology, refer to Annex 1.

4. Political Neutrality Certification

I hereby certify as a Senior Officer of Phoenix SPI 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 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
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5. Contract Value

The contract value was \$187,030.03; this survey wave accounted for \$141,279.81 of that cost (including HST)

