

Survey of Electors Following the March 4, 2024, Federal By-election in the Electoral District of Durham (ON)

Executive Summary

Prepared for Elections Canada

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Supplier name: Phoenix Strategic Perspectives Inc.

This public opinion research report presents the results of a telephone survey conducted to help evaluate the March 4, 2024, federal by-election in the electoral district of Durham. In total, 402 surveys were completed from March 5 to 19, 2024.

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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 March 4, 2024, federal by-election held in the electoral district of Durham (Ontario). 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 EC's programs and services to the electorate. The results will be used to assist in evaluating and refining EC'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

- A large majority of respondents (85%) said that they were aware that a federal by-election took place in Durham.
- Nearly two thirds (64%) of respondents knew that electors could register at the polling place on election day and then vote immediately after. Fewer, but still a majority at 57%, were aware that electors can check, update or complete their voter registration on the EC website.
- When asked to identify the current ways to vote in a federal election, respondents were aware of the main voting methods, with most (87%) able to identify voting in person at a polling station on election day, followed by voting at advance polls in person (60%) and voting by mail (47%). One in five (19%) had the impression that it is possible to vote online.

Aided recall of Elections Canada advertising and communications

- Most electors (84%) who were aware of the federal by-election reported receiving their voter information card (VIC).
- Approximately two thirds (65%) of the electors who were aware of the by-election saw or heard advertising from EC about where, when and how to vote on at least one medium or format. Specifically, 28% recalled hearing advertising on the radio or an audio platform, 25% on social media and 23% when browsing websites or on a mobile application. Roughly one in 10 (11%) recalled seeing advertising from EC in a local newspaper.
- A large majority (83%) of the electors who were aware of the federal by-election felt that they were informed about when, where and how to vote, with 71% saying that they felt very informed and 12% saying they felt somewhat informed.

Voter registration

- Relatively few electors took action to confirm their voter registration. Fifteen percent (15%) checked to make sure that they were registered, while 3% updated their registration information and 2% had recently registered to vote.
- Among those who confirmed their voter registration, a variety of actions were taken to do so, with one quarter (25%) making sure that their VIC was correct and roughly one in five contacting EC through the website (19%) and using EC's Online Voter Registration System (18%).

Voter participation

- Two thirds (67%) of electors who were aware of the Durham by-election reported voting in it.¹
- Among respondents who did **not** vote in the by-election, the most common reasons for not doing so were everyday life or health reasons (39%) and political reasons (33%). Just over one in 10 (13%) did not vote for reasons related to the electoral process.
- Virtually everyone (98%) voted at either a polling station on election day (63%) or an advance polling station (35%).

Experience at the polling place

- One quarter (25%) of those who said they voted in person reported doing so in the morning between 8:00 a.m. and noon. The rest were almost evenly split between voting in the afternoon between noon and 4:00 p.m. (34%) and in the evening between 4:00 p.m. and the close of polls (36%).
- Among those who voted on election day, peak voting times were between 4:00 p.m. and the close of polls (41%). Among those who voted at an advance polling station, peak voting time was between noon and 4:00 p.m. (42%).
- Six in 10 (61%) of those who voted in person said it took five minutes or less to travel to the polling place, while nearly three in 10 (28%) said it took them between six and 10 minutes. When broken out by type of polling station, those who voted on election day (69%) were more likely than those who voted at an advance poll (45%) to say it took them five minutes or less to travel to the polling place.
- Nearly everyone (98%) who voted in person said the building where they voted was suitable, with 12% reporting it was somewhat suitable, and 86% saying it was very suitable.
- Seven in 10 (69%) of those who voted in person said that voting took them five minutes or less, with most other in-person voters (28%) saying it took them between six and 15 minutes. When broken out by type of poll, 73% of those who voted on election day said it took five minutes or less compared to 61% of those who voted at an advance poll.

¹ Self-reported voter turnout is historically over-reported in public opinion surveys. In this survey, self-reported turnout was 67%, while the turnout rate across all by-elections among registered electors was 27.9%. 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).

Voter identification

- Ninety-five percent (95%) of those who received their VIC and voted in person brought it with them to the polling place.
- Almost everyone who voted (97%) found it very easy to meet the identification requirements, with an additional 1% saying it was somewhat easy to meet the identification requirements.

Satisfaction with voting experience

- The vast majority of those who said they voted in the by-election found it very easy to vote (96%), were very satisfied with the services provided by EC staff (93%) and were very satisfied with their overall voting experience (90%).

Fairness of the by-election and trust in the results

- Just over two thirds (68%) of electors surveyed thought that EC ran the by-election fairly, with just over half (57%) saying very fairly and 11% saying somewhat fairly.
- Almost nine in 10 respondents (88%) reported having trust in the accuracy of the election results, with nearly six in 10 (58%) expressing a very high level of trust and 30% a somewhat high level of trust.

3. Methodology

A telephone survey was conducted with 402 eligible electors in the Durham federal electoral district. The data collection took place from March 5 to 19, 2024. 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. Three (n=3) electors completed the survey online; the remaining 399 electors did so over the telephone. Based on a sample of this size, the overall results would have a maximum margin of error of $\pm 4.9\%$, 19 times out of 20. Maximum margins of error for sub-samples 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's 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
President
Phoenix Strategic Perspectives Inc.

5. Contract value

The contract value was \$187,030.03; this survey wave accounted for \$48,140.40 of that cost (including HST).