

Privy Council Office

Understanding Canadians' Attitudes and Behaviours Towards Water Use

Final Report

Prepared for Privy Council Office

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1. Executive Summary

1.1. Introduction

Forum Research was commissioned to conduct a survey of Canadians covering topics important to the Privy Council Office and the Government of Canada. The survey topics included Canadians' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours related to water use and fresh water management topics. Insights garnered from the quantitative study will enable the Government of Canada to further develop and refine policies, program implementation, and communication strategies.

This report addresses the methodological details of the study pertaining to the time period between January 15, to February 9, 2026. This is the final report.

1.2. Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to provide the Privy Council Office Impact and Innovation Unit (PCO-IIU) and Canada Water Agency (CWA) with high-quality data and information on Canadians' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours related to water use and fresh water management topics. This includes:

- behaviours around water use and water conservation;
- experience with water-related issues;
- barriers/drivers to water conservation behaviours;
- attitudes and beliefs around fresh water and water security in Canada;
- support for existing and proposed policies and programs; and
- perceptions of roles and responsibilities of different levels of government in water management.

Insights generated from this quantitative study will enable the Government of Canada to further develop and refine water focused policy, programs, and communications meet the specific needs of Canadians.

1.3. Overall Approach

The Privy Council Office provided specific requirements for conducting the survey in its request for proposal. Forum Research gathered comprehensive information regarding Canadians' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours related to water use and fresh water management topics.

The survey was conducted using the computer-assisted web interview (CAWI, online survey) methodology and was administered in both official languages to the Canadian population.

1.4. Questionnaire Design

The Privy Council Office provided Forum Research with a draft version of the questionnaire. Forum Research worked with the Privy Council Office project team to review the questionnaire, with specific attention to question wording, ordering, and the overall flow of the survey. The survey was pre-tested before data collection upon request from the Privy Council Office. The pre-tests aimed to achieve 50 completes, with 25 administered in French and 25 administered in English. The pre-

test data was shared with the Privy Council Office. A thorough review of the survey flow, logic, and questionnaire design was conducted by both Forum Research and the Privy Council Office.

Two attention check questions and one speeder check were added throughout the survey to help identify low-quality responses. Respondents who failed two or more checks were automatically removed from the dataset. In addition, respondents flagged as speeders were reviewed with additional scrutiny for evidence of further speeding or other indicators of poor data quality, alongside the review conducted for all survey cases.

1.5. Sample Design

The sample was sourced using an online panel methodology, which includes a combination of Fuzion panel and a partner panel to achieve the required sample size of n=2,275.

The sample targets adults living in Canada 18 years of age and older, aiming for appropriate representation of gender, age, education and regional split from 2021 Statistics Canada Census. The sample includes general population respondents (n=2,000) and an oversample of n=275 Canadians from different regions to ensure balanced representation and enable subgroup analyses.

Upon completion of fieldwork and data cleaning, Forum Research achieved a total of n=2,280 completed surveys, including n=2,008 from the general population sample and n=272 from the oversample. Of the total completes, n=781 were collected through Fuzion panel and n=1,499 through the Cint panel.

1.6. Sample Metrics

The following tables describe the obtained sample metrics broken out by region, age, education, and gender for this survey wave.

REGIONAL BREAKOUT		
Province	Frequency	Percent
Alberta	238	10.4%
British Columbia	278	12.2%
Manitoba	173	7.6%
New Brunswick	65	2.9%
Newfoundland and Labrador	45	2.0%
Northwest Territories	2	0.1%
Nova Scotia	82	3.6%
Nunavut	-	-
Ontario	781	34.3%
Prince Edward Island	14	0.6%
Quebec	442	19.4%
Saskatchewan	159	7.0%
Yukon	1	0.04%
TOTAL	2,280	100%

AGE BREAKOUT		
Age	Frequency	Percent
18-24	157	6.9%
25-34	426	18.7%
35-44	373	16.4%
45-54	362	15.9%
55-64	373	16.4%
65-74	407	17.9%
75+	182	8.0%
TOTAL	2,280	100%

GENDER BREAKOUT		
Gender	Frequency	Percent
Man	1,109	48.6%
Woman	1,155	50.7%
Non-binary person	8	0.4%
Another gender identity	2	0.1%
Prefer not to say	6	0.3%
TOTAL	2,280	100%

EDUCATION BREAKOUT		
Education	Frequency	Percent
Elementary school or less	17	0.7%
Some high school (No certificate, diploma or degree)	165	7.2%
High school diploma or equivalent	546	23.9%
Registered Apprenticeship or other trades certificate or diploma	136	6.0%
Partial college/university	142	6.2%
College or CEGEP certificate or diploma	415	18.2%
University certificate or diploma below bachelor's level	112	4.9%
Bachelor's degree	480	21.1%
Postgraduate degree above bachelor's level	252	11.1%
Prefer not to say	15	0.7%
TOTAL	2,280	100%

1.7. Weighting

Forum Research, in collaboration with the PCO, applied a weighting strategy (using 2021 Statistics Canada Census data) which is balanced according to:

- Age
- Gender
- Education
- Region

Weighting was conducted at the end of the fieldwork with the data collected.

1.8. Response Rate

Response rate is calculated by the number of responses to the survey divided by the total number of invitations sent. The response rate was 10.3%.

1.9. Generalization of Data

The sample has been weighted to ensure it accurately reflects Canadians' opinions. Because the survey was conducted using online samples, the sample cannot be assumed to be truly random. Although traditional margin of error cannot be calculated for online samples, it is helpful to compare what the margin of error would be for a probability sample of the same size as a reference point. A sample of $n=2,280$ Canadians results in an overall margin of error of $\pm 2.05\%$, 19 times out of 20.

Measures were taken in order to reduce the influence of non-response bias. At the beginning of the survey, respondents were assured that their answers will remain anonymous and confidential. To reduce item non-response bias, all questions in the online survey were mandatory, meaning respondents were unable to proceed to the next question without providing an answer to the current question. However, many questions included "prefer not to say" as an answer option for those who did not wish to provide an answer.

1.10. Research Outcomes

The findings of the research are expected to be used to inform the Government of Canada about Canadians' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours relating to freshwater management. Insights will enable the Government of Canada to further develop and refine water-focused policy, programs, communications, and regulations to meet the specific needs of Canadians.

1.11. Total Contract Value

The total contract value is equal to \$34,290.87.

1.12. Political Neutrality Statement

I hereby certify as Senior Officer of Forum Research Inc. that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the *Policy on Communications and Federal Identity and the Directive on the Management of Communications - Appendix C (Appendix C: Mandatory Procedures for 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.

Signature:



Dr. Lorne Bozinoff

President & CEO

Forum Research Inc.

2. Appendix: Panel Information

2.1. Forum Fuzion Panel

The Forum Fuzion Panel was used to reach the general population. The Fuzion panel is one of Canada's largest online probability-based panels built using Random-Digit Dialing (RDD) to recruit panelists, a purely random method that ensures sampling integrity. As a result, the Fuzion panel is a probability-based panel.

Panel Recruitment, Validation, and Maintenance

The Forum panel is continually monitored to ensure that all data collected is of the highest quality. Panelists were locked out after participating once in the research, ensuring that all survey responses were provided by unique respondents.

The Fuzion panel is one of Canada's largest online probability-based panels with over 200,000 panelists and growing. The majority of panelists have been invited through random digit dial recruitment. Through Forum Poll, a recurring monthly RDD telephone survey, each month, approximately 2,000-3,000 individuals are recruited from across Canada. No river sampling or marketplaces are used to conduct recruitment, making it possible to maintain control over the circulation of the surveys.

To ensure data quality, all panelists undergo validation at registration, including de-duplication, password restrictions, and detailed profiling. Engagement is monitored through AccuPanel Score, a machine-learning system that detects low-quality respondents, who are blocked if their score falls below 5. Panelists also have a health score to prevent oversampling and encourage balanced participation. Panelists can also be locked out from a specific project after participating once in the research.

Panel maintenance includes a double opt-in process, six-month profile updates, and removal of inactive members. Quality control measures—such as digital fingerprinting, speed checks, and logic tests—identify and eliminate fraudulent responses. Participation is controlled, with no more than one survey per week and minimum exclusion periods to reduce survey fatigue.

The Forum panel is continually monitored to ensure that all data collected is of the highest quality and representative for research.

Demographic Composition

A summary of the demographic composition of Fuzion panelists is outlined below.

Province:

- Alberta: 14%
- British Columbia: 16%
- Manitoba: 4%
- Ontario: 39%
- Quebec: 17%

- Saskatchewan: 3%
- Atlantic: 6%
- North (Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Yukon): <1%

Age:

- 18-24: 10%
- 25-34: 23%
- 35-44: 23%
- 45-54: 16%
- 55-64: 15%
- 65+: 13%

Gender:

- Male: 48%
- Female: 52%

2.2. Cint Panel

The Cint Marketplace was used alongside Forum Fuzion to reach the general population in Canada. Unlike Forum, Cint does not maintain its own panel but is programmatically connected to hundreds of panel providers, giving access to a large and diverse pool of potential respondents.

Panel Recruitment, Validation, and Maintenance

Cint leverages a variety of recruitment sources through its supply partners, including social media, affiliates, referrals, and targeted advertising, ensuring broad coverage and diversity. Most partners require respondents to complete a Double Opt-In process, and all participants must agree to Cint's General Usage Terms, Privacy Policy, and Cookie Policy before taking part in any survey.

All supply partners undergo rigorous vetting by Cint's Supply and Partner Sales team to ensure respondent quality. Validation checks include proprietary and third-party tools such as email/SMS verification and ID verification. Respondent engagement and data quality are monitored through the Partner Optimization Program, which tracks metrics such as reconciliation rates to identify and address low-quality responses.

Survey invitations are managed by individual suppliers and typically disclose the estimated length of interview, incentive amounts, and, where applicable, whether sensitive or personally identifiable information will be collected. These measures ensure that the respondents accessed through Cint are high-quality, reliable, and representative of the target population.

Demographic Composition

A summary of the demographic composition of Cint panelists is outlined below.

Province:

- Ontario: 38%

- Quebec: 24%
- British Columbia: 12%
- Alberta: 11%
- Manitoba: 4%
- Saskatchewan: 3%
- Nova Scotia: 3%
- New Brunswick: 2%
- Newfoundland and Labrador: 2%
- Prince Edward Island: <1%
- Northwest Territories: <1%
- Yukon: <1%
- Nunavut: <1%

Age:

- 18-24: 8%
- 25-34: 19%
- 35-44: 21%
- 45-54: 17%
- 55-64: 16%
- 65+: 17%

Gender:

- Male: 49%
- Female: 51%