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Pre-Budget Focus Group Research – Winter 2025

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Pre-Budget Focus Group Research – Winter 2025 – Final report

Prepared for Finance Canada by Environics Research

February 2025

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Executive summary

Background and objectives

Finance Canada commissioned Environics Research to conduct qualitative research among Canadians in late January 2025 in the lead-up to the expected 2025 federal budget. The research objectives were to assess Canadians' concerns and perceptions of the current state of the Canadian economy and upcoming federal budget, and related issues such as interest rates and housing, as well as their attitudes towards Canada-U.S. relations in the context of the threat of tariffs and demands for more defence spending.

Methodology

Environics Research conducted a series of 10 online focus groups between January 23 and 29, 2025. A total of 71 Canadians took part in these group discussions about Canada's economy. The focus groups were conducted in five regions - three in Ontario, two in Atlantic Canada, two in British Columbia, two in Quebec, and one in the prairies provinces and were divided based on age cohort (18-34, 34-55 or 55+) and/or housing situation (i.e., prospective homebuyers, Canadians whose mortgage is up for renewal). The two Quebec sessions were conducted in French and the other eight sessions were conducted in English.

The 71 participants were all 18 years of age or over, and included a range of ages, education, and backgrounds. The groups lasted approximately 90 minutes and consisted of between six and eight participants (out of 8 people recruited for each group). Participants were each provided a $100 honorarium.

Statement of limitations: Qualitative research provides insight into the range of opinions held within a population, rather than the weights of the opinions held, as would be measured in a quantitative study. The results of this type of research should be viewed as indicative rather than projectable to the population.

Contract value

The contract value was $282,861.60 (including HST). This is the first of four waves of research over the next two years each to be reported on under separate cover.

Use of findings of the research. By gauging and analysing the opinions of Canadians, the Government of Canada gains insights into important policy areas related to the mandate of the department and related services. The information gained through this public opinion research will be shared throughout Finance Canada to assist it when establishing priorities, developing policies, and planning programs and services.

Key findings

A. Perceptions of Canada's economy

When asked to describe the state of the economy in one word, the vast majority used negative words such as "uncertain," "poor," "tough," "unaffordable," "difficult," "stressful," "strained," "struggling," "unstable" and "unpredictable".

Across regions and age groups, there was a major focus on the unaffordability of daily life. Participants consistently made specific mention of the high cost of groceries and housing. They felt that wages had not kept up with the rising cost of living.

Most were quite pessimistic about prospects for the Canadian economy in the coming year. There was little expectation that anything would improve with regard to housing, grocery prices or wages. There were also many unprompted mentions of the economically destabilizing impact of possible U.S. tariffs on Canadian imports and a potential trade war with Canada.

B. Inflation and the cost of living

While there was some acknowledgement that the rate of increase in prices may have levelled off, participants lamented how prices for groceries and housing in particular had stalled at very high and unaffordable levels.

There was little unprompted awareness of steps that the Government of Canada had taken to try to deal with cost-of-living issues, apart from the current GST/HST break that would be expiring soon. After prompting there was some recall of child-care and dental care programs helping some people. Government actions on affordability were viewed as mostly temporary stopgap measures or as only helping a small number of people who qualified for them.

Some participants expressed a desire for more broad-based tax cuts and/or eliminating carbon pricing. Some also hoped the government would act on price gouging by grocers while also dealing with rising rents.

C. Housing

Housing remains a major economic concern among Canadians. However, most participants were unaware of any measures the federal government has put in place to assist with housing affordability. Some had heard of the First Home Savings Account (FHSA) and a few mentioned 30-year mortgages or some agreements with cities to build more affordable housing.

There was a feeling that housing policies had left renters behind and many would have liked to see more measures such as rent controls to address this. Some also felt that immigration needed to be reduced to allow housing construction to catch up to population growth.

D. Federal Budget Priorities

When asked about priorities for the next federal budget, participants primarily emphasized the cost of living, housing, healthcare, and education. Specific measures they highlighted included controlling food

prices, curbing price gouging by grocer monopolies, increasing affordable housing options, providing more support for renters and first-time homebuyers, and reducing taxes—with some specifically referencing carbon pricing. Other priorities mentioned included greater investment in mental health services, addressing the shortage of doctors, and supporting small businesses and employment programs for young people.

E. Canada-U.S. Relations – Trade and Tariffs

The relationship between Canada and the United States was viewed as very strained and uncertain due to concerns about tariffs and various actions recently taken by the U.S. government. The words most frequently used to describe current relations between Canada and the U.S. were quite negative and included “uncertain,” “tense,” “broken,” “strained,” “fraught,” “bully,” and “terrifying.”

There was widespread awareness of the potential tariffs, with many participants voluntarily sharing their opinions on related statements made by the U.S. president. The overwhelming sentiment was one of frustration and disappointment. Participants felt Canada was being disrespected and that a longstanding partnership and alliance were being jeopardized. American actions were viewed as arbitrary, unjustified and intimidating.

Participants were split as to whether they thought the 25% tariffs would in fact be imposed. About half felt this would happen, while others thought the tariffs might be applied at a lower level or that the threat of them was just a negotiating tactic.

Most felt that an American imposition of 25% tariffs and any subsequent Canadian retaliation would pose grave threats to the Canadian economy, These would include job losses in certain sectors (e.g., auto industry, the energy sector etc.) and higher prices, particularly if Canada applied tariffs on American products.

F. Migrants and Fentanyl

There was some awareness, after prompting, of American demands that Canada take action on migrants and fentanyl crossing the border. Participants were uncertain whether this was a point to be negotiated or whether U.S. tariffs would be imposed regardless of anything Canada did.

Most felt that the amount of fentanyl entering the U.S. from Canada was likely minimal, making U.S. concerns seem unwarranted. Some pointed out that a far greater issue may be the flow of guns and other contraband into Canada from the U.S.

Participants perceived migrant crossings into the U.S. as primarily occurring at the Mexico-U.S. border and were sceptical of this being a significant issue along the Canadian border. It was noted that there was a lot of irregular migration into Canada from the U.S., such as crossings at Roxham Road.

G. Canada’s Response to the U.S.

There was a strong desire for Canada to take a bold and decisive stance in response to these American threats and that all options needed to be considered. This was seen as a matter of national pride.

The most common specific unprompted suggestions included retaliatory tariffs on American imports and restricting exports of key commodities such as oil and gas, hydroelectric power, and critical metals to the U.S. Some also suggested taking some action on securing the border and on diversifying our trade to be less dependent on the U.S. and becoming more self-sufficient. Others mentioned taking personal action such as boycotting American products and avoiding travel to the U.S.

Most felt that addressing proposed U.S. tariffs needed to be primarily addressed by the federal government with cooperation and support from the provinces. Some referenced the Canadian Prime Minister's forthcoming resignation and worried that this could impact the federal government's ability to respond effectively.

When presented with a list of possible Canadian responses to tariffs, participants favoured restricting hydroelectricity and oil and gas exports to the U.S., imposing dollar-for-dollar tariffs on American imports and encouraging consumers to "buy Canadian."

Some noted that retaliatory tariffs on American imports could have a major financial impact on Canadians due to the impact on consumer prices in Canada. When this point was raised, many became less certain about pursuing this retaliatory approach.

Having consumers "buy Canadian" was seen as a way for citizens to feel they are playing a role but some were skeptical whether enough people would actually do this to make a difference to American decision makers.

H. Canada's Defence Spending

Most were unfamiliar with recent news about Canada's defence spending, though there was some awareness of Canada trying to meet NATO's spending target of 2% of each partner country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Participants felt that Canada ought to live up to its commitments on defence spending and that if other NATO countries were doing this then we should follow suit.

It was noted that the world is increasingly dangerous and that we need to protect our borders and the Arctic, while also having sufficient military resources to deal with potential natural disasters.

The recent demands by the U.S. that Canada and other NATO countries spend 5% of their GDP on defence were considered far too drastic an increase from current levels. Some speculated that this was a tactic by the U.S. to pressure Canada and other countries into purchasing more American-made weapons.

Some expressed the view that Canada is not and should not aspire to be a military superpower, as this contradicts their image of Canada as a peaceful nation with primarily a peacekeeping role on the global stage.

Political neutrality statement and contact information

I hereby certify as senior officer of Environics that the 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.

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Introduction

Finance Canada commissioned Environics Research to conduct qualitative research among Canadians in late January 2025 in the lead-up to the 2025 federal budget. The research objectives were to assess Canadians' concerns and perceptions of the current state of the Canadian economy and related issues such as inflation and housing, their expectations about the role of the Government of Canada in the economy, their current financial concerns, and their priorities for Budget 2025. Additionally, to explore Canadians' attitudes towards Canada-U.S. relations in the context of threat of tariffs and demand for more defence spending. The following specific topics were explored in the research:

- The state of the Canadian economy;
- Inflation, interest rates and housing;
- Priorities for Budget 2025;
- Canada-United States relations;
- Canada's response to tariffs;
- Defence spending

Background

Each year, the Department of Finance is responsible for preparing the federal budget. To help inform the spending decisions made in the Budget, the Department commissions public opinion research on the state of the economy in efforts to better understand the public environment into which it is communicating. The use of qualitative research allows the Department to get a clear and current sense of the evolution of the public mood towards the state of the economy, sense of personal economic well-being and government actions in the economic sphere. As the Canadian economy continues to face pressures, policy experts, economists and communications specialists must remain informed on public views on the general state of the economy and government actions within the economic sphere.

Detailed findings

A. Perceptions of State of Canada's Economy

Word associations

At the start of each session, participants were asked to share one word that they felt best described the current state of the Canadian economy. Negative words far outnumbered the neutral to positive words in this exercise. The words participants provided typically conveyed feelings of uncertainty and negativity. These most often included words such as "tough," "uncertain," "stressful," "poor," "unstable," "flawed," "nerve-wracking," "cliff-hanger," "fragile" and "struggling."

A smaller number of chose words that conveyed imbalance in the economy such as "unbalanced," "unequal," and "uneven." They typically elaborated about inequities in the economy between the very rich and everyone else or between regions or between generations. Only a small number of participants chose words that conveyed a more neutral or even positive view of the economy such as "well" or even "okay."

Across all regions and age groups, most participants described the economy with words that conveyed worry, difficulty, and stress. Only a small number used words that implied a more ambiguous view, using terms like "fragile" or "cliffhanger" to suggest the economy stands at a critical juncture, particularly due to the on-going news from the United States. However, the prevailing sentiment was one of pessimism about Canada's economic outlook, with little expectation of improvement. This pessimism was partly driven by concerns about the unaffordability of daily life, particularly the rising costs of groceries and housing, while wages had failed to keep pace with inflation. It was also partly driven by all the recent news.

While older participants expressed concerns about housing costs for their adult children, this sentiment was most frequently mentioned by younger participants and renters. Though older participants occasionally raised the issue, young people (ages 18 to 34) were more likely to highlight economic imbalance, citing a widening gap between the wealthy and the middle class. They also voiced concerns about the job market, where salaries make it "untenable" and "unaffordable" to support a family, buy a home, or keep up with rising living costs.

Older participants echoed these concerns on behalf of their adult children but were more focused on the impact of inflation on daily expenses rather than economic imbalance or job market challenges, as they were at a different stage in life. Meanwhile, older, and more financially secure participants (e.g., homeowners) were more likely to discuss tensions with the United States and the potential impact of U.S. tariffs on Canadian imports. For them, this possibility added another layer of economic instability.

Specific economic concerns

When participants were asked about their specific economic concerns, they tended to expand on their feelings of being challenged by the high cost of everyday life and the lack of affordability. It was frequently noted that grocery and housing prices had surged in recent years and were showing no signs of dropping back at all to previous levels, while wages had remained stagnant. While some participants acknowledged that the cost of groceries and other commodities are maybe not surging at the same rate

as they were a couple of years ago, they have levelled off at a very high level. The current prices were not yet seen to be "the new normal."

There were also numerous mentions of there being a tighter job market now. Several participants shared anecdotes about friends or family members having been laid off and not being able to find work – unless they were willing to take low paying jobs that they were overqualified for. To emphasize this point, many highlighted job market-related difficulties, including job losses and challenges in securing stable employment, especially for younger people who are just starting their careers. All of these factors were causing a perception of a growing gap between the wealthy and everyone else.

Concerns about housing affordability persisted, with many young professionals struggling to enter the market without financial assistance from family – a feeling shared by both older participants and younger. Government intervention was a recurring theme across groups, with suggestions to regulate monopolies, address inflation, and improve affordability measures.

A few participants mentioned the effect of political instability, both domestic and international, on economic confidence. At the time of these focus groups, participants were cognisant about the potential of a looming trade war with the U.S. Because of this context and ongoing news cycle, several participants discussed the economic impact such a situation could have on businesses, taxes, and international trade. Some business owners expressed concerns about uncertainty discouraging investment, while others noted rising government employment and taxation as potential risks. In addition to the possibility of U.S. tariffs, participants discussed broader global trends and the lingering effects of the pandemic as factors influencing Canada's economy and also about future related concerns about the impact of a potential trade war with the United States.

A few participants noted small pockets of economic stability, such as continued construction growth and labour shortages in certain sectors, but these were largely overshadowed by broader financial stress. Rising household debt, mortgage rate increases, and student financial struggles were also highlighted as growing economic burdens. Overall, the discussion at this point reflected widespread economic anxiety, with many participants expressing little hope for improvement in the coming year. It was noted that what happens to the Canadian economy is so dependent on factors outside of our control such as world economic trends, conflicts such as Ukraine and the impact of tariffs being imposed by the U.S.

B. Affordability and Housing

Perception of economy and inflation looking ahead

Participants were asked about their prognosis for the Canadian economy over the coming year and whether they expected things to improve, deteriorate or stay about the same. The general consensus was that the economic situation was likely to worsen or at best remain as weak as it is right now. Many pointed to stagnant salaries and a weak job market as worsening conditions, particularly with no expectation that the cost of everyday essentials would decrease anytime soon. It was also noted that factors outside of Canada such as ongoing wars in the world and the possibility of a trade war with the U.S. made them feel pessimistic about where the economy might go in the coming year. The current political instability in Canada added to the perception that Canada is in a precarious situation.

After an initial discussion on personal economic concerns and the overall state of the Canadian economy, participants were asked about rising prices (inflation) and whether it remains as significant a problem today as it was a year or two ago. Since the cost of living had already emerged as a major concern impacting their everyday lives, participants elaborated on why it continues to be a pressing issue. They discussed lifestyle changes made to cope with inflation, such as buying in bulk, and expressed widespread concern about rising interest rates and significant increases in property taxes. Other growing expenses, including rental prices and college or university tuition, were also highlighted as financial burdens.

Government's Response to Affordability

When asked about the federal government's role in addressing rising costs and easing financial pressure on Canadians, participants emphasized the urgent need for the government to take meaningful action, as many viewed the current economic state as unsustainable and stagnant. When asked for more specifics on how the federal government could help Canadians with the rising cost of living, some participants called for broad-based tax cuts and the elimination of carbon pricing. Others emphasized the need for government action against price gouging by grocery monopolies and the need for stronger rent controls to address rising housing costs for renters.

When asked about awareness of any government measures to address affordability and the cost of living, about half of participants were not aware of anything. Some mentioned the soon-to-expire GST/HST break and once that was prompted many other nodded in agreement. After prompting, some acknowledged child-care and dental care programs as examples of programs that are likely beneficial to certain specific people or groups. A few participants mentioned having recently received government checks in the mail, such as the carbon rebate or cheques from the Ontario government. Overall, there was a widespread sense that government actions so far had been temporary stopgap and short-term measures or had only benefited a limited number of people.

Addressing Housing Affordability

As noted earlier, the high cost of housing was a major economic concern across all groups, not just those in major urban centres. Participants in Atlantic Canada and the Prairie provinces also raised it as an issue. The concerns about housing were not just about how unaffordable homes are to purchase, but also a perceived crisis among renters with rents having increased so much in recent years. The rise in interest rates in recent years also meant that some participants were having to deal with much higher mortgage payments.

With housing remaining a major economic concern for participants, there was a general feeling that the government hasn't done much to address the underlying issues. The larger issue of housing affordability came up most among younger participants, however it was a common concern across all age groups. The differentiator was that older participants were more worried about the younger generation's ability to purchase a home, as they felt more stable in that regard.

When asked about what the federal government has done to alleviate housing costs and supply, participants were mostly unaware of any measures put in place. Some had heard of the First Home Savings Account (FHSA) and a few mentioned 30-year mortgages or some agreements with cities to build more affordable housing. There was a feeling that housing policies had left renters behind. Many

would have liked to see more measures such as rent controls to address this. Some also felt that immigration needed to be reduced to allow housing construction to catch up to population growth. Some participants also mentioned how the financialization of housing had been a major factor in the soaring cost of housing and that ideally the government would find a way to address that. Among participants who were renewing their mortgages in the coming two years, awareness of the government's new Mortgage Charter was non-existent.

During this discussion, participants discussed potential steps the federal government could take to address the issue. Many emphasized the need for more affordable housing options, with suggestions including rent-to-own programs, increased investment in community and affordable housing, and cooperative housing models. Some also called for funding rental projects, restricting short-term rentals like Airbnb, and incentivizing secondary suites to increase housing supply.

The conversation also touched on broader government policies affecting housing affordability. Some participants criticized certain initiatives for unintentionally driving up prices, while others highlighted the impact of interest rate changes on mortgage holders. There was general agreement that current government measures, such as GST rebates and direct payments, were temporary solutions rather than long-term fixes. Participants emphasized the need for structural changes, including stronger rent controls and greater federal investment in affordable housing developments.

C. Budget Priorities

Desired budget priorities

Participants were told that the federal government would soon be announcing a federal budget and were asked what they would most like to see prioritized in the budget. The priorities mentioned focused mainly on the cost of living, housing and health care (with most not distinguishing between federal and provincial jurisdiction). These included:

- Implement price controls or caps on groceries
- Provide tax rebates; tax cuts
- Cut carbon pricing
- Improve affordable housing programs
- Implement rent controls
- Address wage disparity; reconcile wages with the cost of living
- Address the healthcare crisis
- Increase employment opportunities by investing in healthcare and school systems
- Increase investment in new Canadian businesses
- Raise pension rates

- Improve childcare accessibility
- Reduce student costs in secondary education
- Expand mental health services
- Address poverty and homelessness

Participants largely agreed that housing affordability should be a top priority. Suggestions included finding ways to reduce the financialization of real estate, rent controls, providing more support for homeless individuals, and implementing tax relief measures to ease financial pressures. Many felt that without significant policy changes, housing would remain out of reach for many Canadians, especially younger individuals and those in urban areas facing rising rents and mortgage rates.

More commonly voiced by participants over 35 years old, there was a call for the government to review its spending and focus on reducing costs. Additionally, there was a strong emphasis on holding grocers accountable to prevent monopolies and price gouging. A recurring theme throughout the discussion was the interconnectedness of these budget priorities. For instance, wage disparity was seen as exacerbating the cost of living, and insufficient investment in healthcare was believed to be intensifying the health accessibility crisis and shortage of doctors. Several participants specifically mentioned the need for more mental health supports and services and wanting the budget to address that as well

D. Canada-United States Relations

Word associations and awareness of recent events

Participants were asked to come up with a single word to describe the current state of relations between Canada and the U.S. The words that were volunteered were very reflective of extensive recent news coverage about tensions over tariffs and statements about the US annexing Canada. The most common words included “uncertain,” “tense,” “broken,” “bullied,” “strained,” “fraught,” “strange,” “unprecedented” and “terrifying.” Some used more neutral words such as ‘interdependent” and “allies.”

It was clear earlier in all the focus groups that the recent events emanating from Washington loomed large. Many participants had already made reference to the economic threats posed by possible tariffs being imposed on Canada. Participants across all regions and groups were very aware of the threat of tariffs and many were very upset by some of the intemperate and disrespectful language they had heard in recent weeks. There were many references to social media posts and statements from Americans insulting Canada and suggesting that Canada be absorbed into the U.S. and other threats being made towards Canada over the past few weeks. As a result Canada-U.S. relations were already very top of mind to most participants.

The words chosen and the explanations given for those words were indicative of how shocked and upset many participants were at the sudden negative turn in relations between the countries. Many expressed anxiety over the impact of U.S. tariffs, potential trade instability, and the broader economic consequences for Canada. Political tensions were another key factor, with participants citing the U.S. administration’s leadership style, uncertainty about future policies, and fears of a backlash against

progressive values in Canada. There was also frustration over Canada's perceived lack of control in shaping the relationship and concerns that Canada takes an overly apologetic stance toward the U.S.

The negative state of Canada-U.S. relations was seen as very much a result of the new leadership in the U.S. which was seen as bullying and aggressive towards Canada for no reason. Some participants felt Parliament being prorogued and the Prime Minister having announced his intention to resign limited the Government of Canada's ability to respond, which they worried could be exploited by the U.S. . Additionally, concerns were raised about the U.S. government withdrawing from international health and environmental agreements and how this contributed to the negative sentiment.

Overall, participants described the relationship as strained, unstable, and worrisome, emphasizing the economic and political unpredictability that affects both countries. There were also some spontaneous references to how there may be legitimate issues that the U.S. has with Mexico or with other countries and that Canada was getting unfairly included.

Trade and tariffs

Participants were asked about their awareness of the U.S. reviewing its free trade agreement with Canada and Mexico (the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement), as well as the possibility of imposing tariffs of up to 25% on Canadian and Mexican imports due to American concerns about migrants crossing from Canada to the U.S. and fentanyl entering the country.

It was clear from the preceding discussion about Canada-U.S. relations in general that awareness of the threat of the U.S. imposing tariffs on Canadian imports was very well known and came up spontaneously in every group. While awareness of this threat of tariffs and the risk of a larger trade war with the U.S. was almost universal, there was much less awareness of the broader issue of the U.S. reviewing its trade agreement with Canada and Mexico. To the vast majority of participants, the primary issue was the immediate threat of tariffs, not the broader 'America First Trade Policy' of which most were unaware.

For the most part, participants had quite a good understanding of what exactly tariffs are and how they function. In each session there was at least one participant who could explain tariffs in detail. It was understood that they have the effect of rendering Canadian exports more expensive and therefore less competitive in the U.S. There was also a good understanding of the impact of tariffs both in hurting Canadian exports but also in terms of them likely triggering retaliatory tariffs imposed by Canada on American imports which would in turn lead to higher prices for Canadian consumers. It was often noted that the costs of a trade war would ultimately be passed on to consumers in both countries.

Opinions were divided on whether the U.S. would follow through with the proposed 25% tariffs on Canadian goods. About half of participants believed they would be implemented, while others thought they might be applied at a lower rate. A few participants viewed the announcement as a negotiation tactic rather than a definitive course of action, suggesting that it should be handled strategically.

When discussing the potential impact of tariffs imposed by the U.S., many participants initially saw them as something that would primarily affect "other people" rather than themselves personally. Some struggled to articulate how it might directly impact their own lives, aside from making everyday costs higher. However, when considering the broader implications for Canadians, participants highlighted concerns about the negative effects on small businesses, the potential weakening of the Canadian

dollar, and, most notably, significant job losses in key industries such as the auto and energy sectors. There was also concern that if Canada imposed retaliatory tariffs on American goods, prices would rise further. Ultimately, some participants recognized that the economic ripple effects would impact all Canadians and even American consumers.

Migrants and fentanyl

The possible linkage between the threat of tariffs and issues around migrants and fentanyl were also explored in more detail. Participants were asked how significant they believed the issue of migrants crossing from Canada to the U.S. was, as well as their perceptions of the gravity of the issue of fentanyl entering the U.S. from Canada.

Most participants saw these concerns as exaggerated and tied to a broader U.S. negotiation strategy for imposing tariffs. They largely believed that the amount of fentanyl coming from Canada was minimal and that U.S. claims were overstated. To emphasize this point, some noted that a much larger issue exists with guns and other contraband flowing into Canada from the U.S. While participants acknowledged fentanyl as a serious problem, they saw it more as a domestic crisis affecting Canadians rather than a major cross-border issue. Some also noted that the real issue is likely fentanyl crossing into the U.S. from Mexico,

Similarly, most participants were unaware of significant migrant crossings from Canada into the U.S. and perceived migration issues as primarily occurring at the Mexico-U.S. border. There was more concern about irregular migration into Canada from the U.S.

Throughout the discussion, some participants noted that regardless of the scale of these issues, responsibility should not be placed solely on Canada or Mexico. Instead, they saw problems like fentanyl smuggling and irregular migration as shared challenges requiring cooperation between all countries involved. At times, participants questioned whether these issues were being used as part of a larger xenophobic narrative in the U.S., where immigrants were being scapegoated for broader, more complex societal problems.

All in all, participants largely viewed the issues of migrants and fentanyl crossing from Canada to the U.S. as being exaggerated by the U.S. government to justify tariffs. Overall, participants agreed that a coordinated federal and provincial strategy would be the best way to address these concerns, though many remained skeptical about their legitimacy as trade-related issues. Some also commented that it was unclear whether there was even a negotiation to be had on these issues since the messaging from the American government was so mixed.

Canada's Response

Throughout the discussion on a potential trade war, as well as the issues of fentanyl and irregular migration, participants consistently emphasized the need for Canada to take a firm and decisive stance. Many saw the situation as a negotiation and believed that Canada must respond boldly, showing a clear willingness to retaliate. Some participants expressed concern that the Canadian Prime Minister's forthcoming resignation and the upcoming leadership vote could weaken the federal government's ability to respond effectively. Despite these concerns, there was a strong consensus that addressing proposed U.S. tariffs should be led by the federal government, with provinces aligned in their support.

Participants stressed the importance of provincial unity to prevent mixed messages that could undermine Canada's position. They also highlighted the need for provinces to carefully consider how any countermeasures would impact their residents to ensure a balanced response that does not disproportionately harm certain regions.

Beyond viewing this as a strategic negotiation, participants also saw the issue as a matter of national pride. When asked about potential responses, the most common suggestions included retaliatory tariffs on American imports, cutting exports of key commodities such as oil, gas, hydroelectric power, and critical metals, and securing the border while diversifying trade to reduce reliance on the U.S. Some also suggested consumer-driven actions like boycotting American products and avoiding travel to the U.S., though there was skepticism about whether enough Canadians would participate to make a meaningful impact.

While participants recognized that retaliation could come at a cost—such as higher consumer prices or economic consequences from restricting energy exports—most felt a strong response was necessary. When presented with a list of potential countermeasures, the most popular choices were restricting hydroelectricity and oil and gas exports to the U.S., imposing dollar-for-dollar tariffs on American imports, and encouraging Canadians to "buy Canadian." While the latter was seen as a way for citizens to contribute, some viewed it as the government shifting responsibility onto consumers, doubting whether widespread participation would be enough to influence U.S. policy.

Participants were then asked to select the two they believed would be most effective in persuading the U.S. to drop its plans. They also had the option to select "None would be effective" if they felt that none of the measures would handle the situation effectively.

The most favored responses included restricting hydroelectricity and oil and gas exports to the U.S., imposing dollar-for-dollar tariffs on American imports, and encouraging consumers to "buy Canadian." Cutting exports of key resources such as oil, gas, hydro, and critical minerals was seen as a particularly strong leverage point. Despite this, some participants were hesitant to support this measure because of the impact it might have on the Canadian economy, as well as the chance that certain provinces would get disproportionately affected.

While the idea of encouraging Canadians to "buy Canadian" was viewed as a way for citizens to contribute, some participants felt it shifted the responsibility onto consumers rather than the government taking direct action. There was also skepticism about whether enough people would commit to this approach for it to have a meaningful impact.

The proposal to limit dairy imports from the U.S. was largely dismissed as many participants were under the impression that Canada imported relatively little dairy from the U.S. in the first place. Targeted tariffs on products such as bourbon or orange juice were seen as small symbolic gestures that were unlikely to have much effect.

Most Effective Measures in Rank Order – Poll

Possible Measures
Canada restricts hydroelectricity exports to the U.S.
Canada imposes dollar-for-dollar tariffs on American imports.

Canada restricts oil and gas exports to the U.S.
Canada encourages consumers to "buy Canadian" to support businesses affected by tariffs.
Canada restricts critical mineral exports to the U.S.
Canada limits dairy imports from the U.S.
Canada imposes targeted tariffs on items like orange juice, bourbon and motorcycles.

In some groups, it was noted that retaliatory tariffs might have a greater financial impact on Canadians than on Americans. When this point was made, participants tended to become less sure of this option.

E. Defence Spending

Canada's defence spending

When it comes to Canada's defence spending, there was a general sentiment among participants that the country does not invest enough. While some were aware that Canada has not met NATO's spending target of 2% of each partner country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), most were unfamiliar with specific developments. Overall, there was strong support for meeting the NATO commitment, with participants citing several key reasons.

Many participants felt that Canada should uphold its commitments as an international partner, especially if other NATO countries are also planning on meeting the 2% threshold. Also, with the world becoming increasingly unstable, participants emphasized the need to protect Canada's borders and strengthen its ability to defend itself. Some also felt that Canada was reliant on the U.S. to counter any threats to Canadian Arctic sovereignty which they saw as problematic—particularly given the recent tensions in Canada-U.S. relations.

Finally, a few participants highlighted the importance of having military resources available for domestic emergency response, particularly for natural disasters. They felt that the military takes too long to mobilize in these situations, and with climate-related disasters becoming more frequent, increased defence spending could help ensure a more timely and effective response.

At a few points in the discussion, some participants took a different stance, arguing that defence spending should not be a priority in the upcoming budget. Those who held this view often felt that the funds would be better allocated to pressing domestic needs, particularly healthcare. Others expressed pride in Canada's identity as a peaceful nation, emphasizing that it is not a hawkish or heavily militarized country—and should remain that way.

When discussing how defence spending should be allocated, participants emphasized the need for increased personnel, acknowledging the time and investment required to recruit in today's changing landscape. Some also highlighted the growing importance of cybersecurity, stressing the need for enhanced measures to address evolving threats across multiple fronts.

Increasing spending to 5% of GDP

Participants were asked about their reaction to the U.S.'s recent call for NATO countries such as Canada to increase defence spending to 5% of GDP. Having just discussed the benefits and challenges of reaching NATO's current 2% target, participants had a very negative reaction to an even bigger increase. They viewed the 5% goal as unrealistic and impractical, with many speculating that it was driven by a covert effort to push Canada and other nations into purchasing American-made weapons.

Throughout the discussion, there was a strong sentiment that Canada is not, and should not aspire to be, a military superpower. Participants felt that such pressure contradicts Canada's values as a peaceful nation with a perceived primarily peacekeeping role on the global stage.

Appendix A: Methodology

Environics Research conducted a series of 10 online focus groups in January 2025 to assess Canadians' attitudes toward the current state of the economy, with a particular focus on attitudes toward such issues as the cost of living, inflation, housing, and priorities for the federal government looking ahead to the upcoming 2025 federal budget. Additionally, to examine attitudes toward Canada-U.S. relations.

Group composition

Environics Research conducted a series of 10 online focus groups between January 23 and 29, 2025. A total of 71 Canadians took part in these group discussions about Canada's economy and provided their perspective on such specific issues as the current economic concerns, cost of living, interest rates, housing, the upcoming federal budget, looming tariffs imposed by the U.S. and defence spending. The focus groups were conducted in five regions - three in Ontario, two in Atlantic Canada, two in British Columbia, two in Quebec, and one in the prairies provinces and were divided based on age cohort (18-34, 34-55 or 55+) and/or housing situation (i.e., prospective homebuyers, Canadians whose mortgage is up for renewal). The two Quebec sessions were conducted in French and the other eight sessions were conducted in English.

Location (Language of groups)	Date	Time
Ontario (English)	Thursday, January 23	5pm EST – Group #1 Prospective home buyers 7pm EST – Group #2 18-34 year olds
Ontario (English)	Friday, January 24	4pm EST – Group #3 55+ year old
B.C./Territories (English)	Saturday, January 25	1pm EST (10am PST) – Group #4 Homeowners renewing mortgage 3pm EST (12pm PST) – Group #5 18-34 year olds
Atlantic provinces (NL, NS, NB, PEI) (English)	Monday, January 27	4pm EST (5pm AST) - Group #6 55+ year olds 6pm EST (7pm AST) - Group #7 18-54 year olds identify as middle class
Quebec (French)	Tuesday, January 28	5pm EST – Group #8 Prospective home buyers 7pm EST – Group #9 35-54 year olds
Prairie provinces (MB, SK, AB) (English)	Wednesday, January 29	6pm EST (5pm CST/4pm MST) – Group #10 18-54 year olds identify as middle class

The 71 participants were all 18 years of age or over, and included range of age, education, and backgrounds. The groups lasted approximately 90 minutes and consisted of between six and eight participants (out of 8 people recruited for each group). Participants were each provided a $100 honorarium.

Recruitment

Environics developed the recruitment screener and provided it to Finance Canada for review prior to its deployment. The recruitment was carried out by Environics' qualitative partner Trend Research, which is one of Canada's most well established and respected qualitative research recruiting operations. All recruiting was conducted by telephone and by e-mail by Trend's professional team of experienced and trained qualitative research recruiters. Trend maintains a panel of prospective qualitative research participants across Canada. The panel is composed of people who have taken part in quantitative surveys and agreed to be contacted to be potential paid participants in qualitative research projects, as well as people who are recruited to the panel through social media promotion. Participants were contacted randomly by phone and e-mail and screened to ensure they were invited to the appropriate session. Participants were also screened to ensure the groups included a mix of gender, education, and age, and that they would be comfortable voicing their opinions in front of others. Normal focus group exclusions were in place (marketing research, media and employment in the federal government, and recent related focus group attendance). Participants were offered a $100 honorarium to encourage participation and thank them for their time commitment.

All groups were video- and audio-recorded for use in subsequent analysis by the research team – during the recruitment process and at the session sign-in, participants provided consent to such recording and were given privacy and confidentially assurances.

Moderation

Two senior researchers were used to moderate all sessions, as follows:

- Derek Leebosh, Vice President, Environics, moderated all English sessions.
- France Mercier, Senior Associate, moderated both French sessions.

All qualitative research work was conducted in accordance with professional standards and applicable government legislation (e.g., PIPEDA).

Statement of limitations

Qualitative research provides insight into the range of opinions held within a population, rather than the weights of the opinions held, as would be measured in a quantitative study. The results of this type of research should be viewed as indicative rather than projectable.

Appendix B: Moderation guide

January 23, 2025

Environics Research

Focus Groups on Canada's Economy – Pre-Budget

Finance Canada – Discussion Agenda

1. Introduction to Procedures (10 minutes)

Hello everyone, my name is [NAME] and I work for Environics Research, a public opinion research company. Welcome to this online focus group. I will be moderating the session. This is one of a series of online focus groups we are conducting on behalf of the Government of Canada with people from across the country. The session should last no more than 90 minutes.

We want to hear your opinions so please feel free to agree or disagree with one another. I want to inform you that we are recording this session to help me write my report. The recording will only be used internally to analyse the research and will not be released to anyone else. MODERATOR TO PRESS "RECORD" ON ZOOM SCREEN

There are also some observers from the research team and from the Government of Canada who are observing the session and taking notes while muted. I would also like to remind you that anything you say here will remain confidential and anonymous and any comments you make will not be linked to you by name in any reporting we do on this project.

For the most part we will be video chatting, but I will also be sharing my screen to show you some things and we will also use the "chat" function from time to time when I ask you to react to things in writing. I will type "hello" in the chat – can everyone see that and respond "Hi" to "everyone" just to make sure that the "chat" feature works for everyone?

I also want to say that if you feel you didn't have a chance to express your opinion on anything during the session, you can feel free to comment in writing in the "chat." Chat with "everyone" unless you feel you need to send me a private message.

Before we get started, I just wanted to also say that if you think there may be a lot of noise at your end (i.e., kids, dog barking etc.) please click the "mute" button and just "unmute" when you want to say something. You will get the cash compensation gift we promised you electronically in the next week or two.

Let's go around the imaginary table and introduce ourselves. Tell us your name and tell us briefly a bit about yourself such as where you are calling from, what sort of work you do or if you are in school and how you would describe the composition of your household (family, pets etc.).

2. Canada's economy, inflation, interest rates, housing (15 minutes)

I want to focus on economic issues and the state of the Canadian economy and how it is affecting you and your household. I will type a question in the CHAT: "*What one word would you use to describe how the Canadian economy is doing these days?"* In other words, if someone from another country asked you how the economy was these days in Canada, what would you say?

Why did you pick that word and what specific economic issues are you most concerned about in terms of how they affect you personally?

How do you think the Canadian economy will do in the coming year? Do you think things will get better or get worse or stay about the same? What makes you say that?

We talked earlier about rising prices, which we refer to as "inflation." Do you think inflation is as much of a problem these days as it was a year or two ago?

What, if anything, has the government of Canada done to address cost of living issues?

PROBE: Dental care, GST/HST break, $10-a-day childcare?

What is the role of the federal government when it comes to helping Canadians with the higher cost of living?

What about interest rates? As you may know, they went up quite a bit in recent years but since last June they have been coming down. How has this affected any of you, if at all?

DO NOT ASK FOR GROUPS 1 AND 8: Do any of you have mortgages up for renewal soon at higher rates than you had before? If so, how will that impact you?

GROUP 4 ONLY: The federal Government has recently introduced a new "Mortgage Charter" which builds on the government's existing guidance and expectations for how financial institutions are to work with Canadians. It will provide tailored relief and ensure mortgage payments are reasonable for borrowers. Had any of you heard of this before?

Do you think this Charter can make a real difference for yourself, or those who may be affected by higher interest rates?

Let's talk about housing. Has anyone heard of any steps the Government of Canada is taking to try to deal with housing affordability and availability? **IF YES:** What have you heard?

What else should the federal government be doing about housing costs and housing supply?

3. Budget priorities (10 minutes)

As you may know, every Spring the federal government announces a Budget for the coming year. This is where they describe what they will invest in, any new programs they are planning, and they make projections on things like the deficit and where the economy is headed.

Please answer this question in the CHAT "*If you could identify one priority to the Minister of Finance for the upcoming federal budget, what would it be?"*

Why do each of you say that?

4. Canada-United States Relations (40 minutes)

General themes

Now let's discuss the current relationship between Canada and the U.S. Could you each type in the CHAT box one word that to you best describes the Canada-U.S. relationship today?

Why did that word come to mind for you?

Have you heard any news recently about the relationship between Canada and the U.S.?

Trade and tariffs

PROBE IF NOT MENTIONED: What about possible tariffs on products coming from Canada and going to the United States? How many of you have heard about that? **IF YES:** What have you heard?

Does everyone know what a tariff is? **IF UNCLEAR EXPLAIN**: It's when a country makes companies that import goods from another country pay "duty" on those imports and the importers will typically pass those costs on to consumers by raising the price they charge for the imported goods.

As you may know, President Donald Trump says that the American Government will look into its free trade deal with Canada and Mexico to determine whether or not the U.S. should continue to participate in it. Trump has also signalled that the U.S. may impose tariffs as high as 25% on all Canadian and Mexican imports, unless Canada addresses migrants crossing from Canada to the U.S., as well as fentanyl crossing the border.

How likely do you think it is that the U.S. will actually end up imposing these 25% tariffs on Canadian goods?

If the U.S. were to impose tariffs on Canadian goods, what do you think the impact would be on Canada's economy?

How would it impact you personally, if at all?

How should the federal and provincial governments deal with these potential trade issues with the U.S., such as tariffs? Should the federal government take the lead, should the federal and provincial governments work together, or should each province manage its own strategy? Why do you say that? What could be the downside of each approach?

Migrants and fentanyl

How much of an issue do you think the crossing of migrants from Canada to the U.S. is? Is it a major or minor issue, or not really an issue at all?

What about fentanyl crossing the border from Canada to the U.S.? Is that actually a big problem?

Canada's response to tariffs

How should Canada respond, if the U.S. imposes tariffs on products coming from Canada?

I'm going to show you a list of actions the Government of Canada could take in response to the U.S. imposing tariffs and I want to hear your reactions to them.

Are there any that you particularly support or oppose? If so, why? **IF NOT MENTIONED, PROBE:** What about restricting oil and gas exports?

SHOW ON SCREEN

- Canada imposes dollar for dollar tariffs on American imports.
- Canada imposes targeted tariffs on items like orange juice, bourbon, and motorcycles.
- Canada restricts hydroelectricity exports to the U.S.
- Canada restricts oil and gas exports to the U.S.
- Canada restricts critical mineral exports to the U.S.
- Canada limits dairy imports from the U.S.
- Canada encourages consumers to "buy Canadian" to support businesses affected by tariffs.

POLL: Now I'm going to conduct a poll on this. You'll see the same list of measures we just discussed. I'd like you to choose which of these you think would be the most effective in convincing the United States to drop its plans to impose tariffs on Canadian imports. You can click on up to 2 of the measures. If you don't think any of these measures would be effective, you can click on "None would be effective." (the last option).

NOTE TO MODERATOR – *After the poll has closed, review results and ask the following:* Why do you think [insert measure chosen most often] is more effective than the other measures?

5. Defence spending (10 minutes)

Finally, let's explore one other issue that relates to the Canada-U.S. relationship which is how much Canada spends on national defence. Has anyone heard, read, or seen anything about Canada's defence spending? **IF YES**: What was it?

Do you think Canada currently spends too little, too much, or about the right amount on national defence? Let's have a show of hands. Why do you feel this way?

The Government of Canada has committed to increase its defense spending to meet NATO's target of 2% of GDP by 2032. This increase will include investments in areas like modernizing NORAD (otherwise known as North American Aerospace Defence Command) for Arctic security, purchasing new equipment like fighter jets, and improving cybersecurity and recruitment efforts for the Armed Forces.

How do you feel about Canada increasing its defense spending to meet NATO's 2% of GDP target by 2032? Just to put this in perspective, this year Canada will spend about $40 billion on defence, which is about 1.3% of our GDP.

Are there specific areas of defence spending that you think should be prioritized? Why is that?

What do you think of the 2032 timeline Canada has set to reach this 2% target?

Recently, the US said they will ask all the countries in NATO – including Canada - to increase spending on defence to 5% of GDP. For context, this would be far more than any country in NATO currently spends on defence. Would you support or oppose Canada increasing its defence spending to 5% of GDP? Why/why not?

Why do you think there have been these requests in the U.S. for Canada to increase its defence spending?

If the U.S. is calling on Canada to spend more on defence does that make this more of a priority? Why/why not?

How should we pay for such a big increase in defence spending? **PROBE**: Raise taxes? Increase the deficit? Cut spending on health care, housing, and other government programs?

6. Wrap up (5 minutes)

We have covered many topics today and really appreciate you taking the time and energy to come down here and give your opinion. Your input is very important and insightful. Before we leave today, I wanted to ask you whether you have any last thoughts that you want to give the Government of Canada about today's topics.

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!

Appendix C: Recruitment screener

November 27, 2024

Environics Research Group Limited

Pre-Budget Focus Groups Winter 2025

Finance Canada

PN12155

Recruitment for Group Discussion

Respondent Name: _____

Home #: _____

Business #: _____

Group #: _____

Recruiter: _____

GROUP 1 Ontario – Prospective homebuyers Thursday, January 23 5:00 pm EST	GROUP 2 Ontario – 18-34 Thursday, January 23 7:00 pm EST	Group 3 Ontario – 55+ Friday, January 24 4:00 pm EST	GROUP 4 BC – Homeowners renewing mortgage Saturday, January 25th 1:00 pm EST (10:00am PST)
GROUP 5 BC – 18-34 Saturday, January 25th 3:00 pm EST (12:00noon PST)	GROUP 6 Atlantic – 55+ Monday, January 27 4:00 pm EST (5pm AST)	GROUP 7 Atlantic – 18-54 Middle class* Monday, January 27 6:00 pm EST (7pm AST)	GROUP 8 Quebec (FR) – Prospective homebuyers Tuesday, January 28 5:00 pm EST
GROUP 9 Quebec (FR) – 35-54 Tuesday, January 28 7:00 pm EST	GROUP 10 Prairies – 18-54 Middle class* Wednesday, January 29 6:00 pm EST (5pm CST/4pm MST)		

Eight recruits per session. $100 incentive. Note demographic breaks for age, income, homeowner status, and prospective homebuyer status. Groups 6 and 7 need a mix from the four Atlantic provinces and Group 10 needs a mix from the three prairie provinces.

"Prospective homebuyer" is defined as anyone currently hoping to buy their first home. This could be a renter or someone living rent-free with family, who is saving or wants to save to buy a home within the next 10 years. This

can include people who want to buy a home but are currently unsure when they will be able to afford to buy their first home.

"Homeowners renewing mortgage" is defined as a homeowner whose mortgage is up for renewal in the next two years.

**For group 7 and 10, use self ID question for middle class. Record their personal and family income (ideally individual income of $50,000 to $100,000 or a household income of $60,000 to $150,000).*

Hello/Bonjour, my name is _____ from Trend Research, a partner of Environics Research. We are conducting a series of online video-conference focus group discussions among people in your region on behalf of the Government of Canada exploring issues around the current state of the Canadian economy. Would you like to continue this discussion in English? / Voulez-vous continuer cette conversation en français?

We are looking to talk to Canadians 18 years or older. Are you at least 18? IF NOT: May I speak to someone who is 18 or older? This study is a research project, not an attempt to sell or market anything. Your participation in the research is completely voluntary, confidential and your decision to participate or not will not affect any dealings you may have with the government.

The format will be a video-conference call discussion on Zoom led by a research professional from Environics that will involve you and some other people from your region. May we have your permission to ask you or someone else in your household some further question to see if you/they fit in our study? This will take about 5 minutes.

Yes 1 **CONTINUE**

No 2 **THANK/DISCONTINUE**

The session will last a maximum of 1.5 hours and you will receive a cash gift of $100 as a thanks for attending the session.

A recording of the session will be produced for research purposes. The recording will be used only by the research professional to assist in preparing a report on the research findings and will be destroyed once the report is completed. All information collected, used, and/or disclosed will be used for research purposes only and administered as per the requirements of the Privacy Act. Environics Research has a privacy policy which can be consulted at https://environicsresearch.com/privacy-policy/

[INTERVIEWER NOTE: IF ASKED ABOUT PRIVACY LAWS, SAY: "The information collected through the research is protected by provisions of the Privacy Act, legislation of the Government of Canada, and the provisions of relevant provincial privacy legislation.] Environics is a member of the Canadian Research Insights Council (CRIC) and adheres to all its standards; the project is registered with the CRIC with the number 20241202-EN027.

NB: If a participant asks for information on the research company conducting the research they can be told: Environics Research is located at 366 Adelaide Street West, Suite 101, Toronto Ontario and can be reached at 416-920-9010.

Yes……..1 – **CONTINUE**

No……2 – **THANK AND TERMINATE**

Are you or is any member of your household or your immediate family employed in:

	No	Yes
A market research, communications or public relations firm, or an advertising agency		
Media (Radio, Television, Newspapers, Magazines, etc.)		
A federal or provincial government department or agency		
A political party		

IF YES TO ANY OF THE ABOVE – THANK AND TERMINATE

2. We have been asked to speak to participants from all different ages. So that we may do this accurately, may I have your exact age please? _____. WRITE IN

Under 18		**TERMINATE**
18-24 years of age	1	**GROUPS 5, 7 AND 10 NEED TO BE THIS AGE**
25-34 years of age	2	**GROUPS 5, 7 AND 10 NEED TO BE THIS AGE**
35-44 years of age	3	**GROUPS 9, 7 AND 10 NEED TO BE THIS AGE**
45-54 years of age	4	**GROUPS 9, 7 AND 10 NEED TO BE THIS AGE**
55-64 years of age	5	**GROUPS 3 AND 6 NEED TO BE THIS AGE**
65-74 years of age	6	**GROUPS 3 AND 6 NEED TO BE THIS AGE**
75 years or more		**TERMINATE**

NB: Groups 1, 4 and 8 can be any age

3. What is your gender?

Male	1	
Female	2	50/50 split, count “other” as either
Other (SPECIFY)_____	3	

4. How many people, including yourself, live in your household and have an income?

One, just me	ASK Q. 5, THEN SKIP TO Q. 7
Two	SKIP TO Q. 6
Three	SKIP TO Q. 6
Four or more	SKIP TO Q. 6

IF ONLY ONE PERSON IN HOUSEHOLD WITH AN INCOME ASK:

5. Which of the following categories best corresponds to your <u>total</u> personal annual income, before taxes, for 2024?

READ

01 - Under $30,000

02 - $30,000 to $50,000

03 - $50,000 to $80,000

04 - $80,000 to $100,000

05 - $100,000 to $120,000

06 - $120,000 to $150,000

07 - $150,000 and over

99 - REFUSE/DK/NA **TERMINATE**

ASK ALL FROM HOUSEHOLDS WITH MORE THAN ONE PERSON WITH AN INCOME

6. Which of the following categories best corresponds to the <u>total</u> annual income, before taxes, of <u>all members</u> of your household, for 2024? READ

01 - Under $30,000

02 - $30,000 to $60,000

03 - $60,000 to $80,000

04 - $80,000 to $100,000

05 - $100,000 to $120,000

06 - $120,000 to $150,000

07 - $150,000 and over

99 - REFUSE/DK/NA **TERMINATE**

ASK ALL

7. Do you currently own or rent your home, or do you live in some other arrangement (e.g., living rent-free with family)?

Rent	**ASK Q. 8, THEN SKIP TO Q. 10**
Own	**SKIP TO Q. 9**
Other (SPECIFY)_____	**ASK Q. 8, THEN SKIP TO Q. 10**

ASK ALL WHO RENT OR LIVE IN ANOTHER ARRANGEMENT:

8. Do you plan to or are you saving to buy your first home anytime within the next 10 years?

Yes, planning/saving to buy my first home in the next 10 years	**GROUPS 1 AND 8**
No, not planning to buy my first home in the next ten years	

ASK ALL HOMEOWNERS

9. Do you have a mortgage on your home? IF YES, when is it up for renewal?

Mortgage to renew in 2025 or 2026 (NEXT YEAR OR 2)	**GROUP 4 (BC)**
Mortgage to renew in 2027 or later (more than 2 years)	
No mortgage at all	

10. Would you consider yourself to be living in poverty, middle class, or well-off?

Living in poverty	
Middle class	**GROUP 7 (ATLANTIC) AND 10 [PRAIRIES] - ALL MUST SAY YES**
Well-off	

NB: GROUP 4 (ATLANTIC) AND GROUP 10 (PRAIRIES) NEED TO BE 18-54, GROUPS 1, 4 AND 8 CAN BE ANY AGE

11. Could you please tell me what is the last level of education that you completed? GET MIX

Some High School only.	1	
Completed High School	2	
Trade School certificate	3	**GET MIX**
Some Post secondary	4	
Completed Post secondary	5	
Graduate degree	6	

12. Are you working (CHECK QUOTAS)?

Full Time (35 hrs. +)	4 minimum	**ASK Q. 13 AND 14**
Part Time (under 35 hrs.)	2 maximum	**ASK Q. 13 AND 14**
Homemaker	1 maximum	
Student	1 maximum	
Retired	2 maximum	
Unemployed	1 maximum	

ASK Q.13 AND Q.14 OF THOSE WHO WORK
13. Do you have an employer or are you self-employed?

Have employer

Self-employed

14. What is your current occupation?

Type of Job

Type of Company

IF MARRIED/LIVING COMMON LAW ASK: WHAT IS YOUR SPOUSE'S OCCUPATION?

Type of Job

Type of Company

TERMINATE IF OCCUPATION RELATES TO EXCLUSIONS IN Q. 1
ASK ALL

15. What is your ethnic background?

IN ONTARIO AND BC Recruit at least three per group who are of non-European descent or who are other visible minorities (i.e., Chinese, or South Asian, but could include aboriginal people or Afro-Canadians as well). In other locations, there is no minimum, but it would still be desirable to have some.

16. Participants in group discussions are asked to voice their opinions and thoughts, how comfortable are you in voicing your opinions in front of others? Are you... (read list)

Very comfortable	1- MINIMUM 5 PER GROUP
Fairly comfortable	2
Not very comfortable	3 TERMINATE

Very uncomfortable 4 TERMINATE

17. Have you ever attended a focus group or a one-to-one discussion for which you have received a sum of money, here or elsewhere?

Yes 1 MAXIMUM 5 PER GROUP

No 2 (SKIP TO Q.21)

IF YES ASK:

18. When did you last attend one of these discussions?

(TERMINATE IF IN THE PAST 6 MONTHS)

19. How many focus groups or one-to-one discussions have you attended in the past 5 years?

(SPECIFY)

IF 5 OR MORE, TERMINATE

20. What were the topics of the focus groups or one-to-one discussions have you attended in the past 5 years?

(SPECIFY)

IF "ECONOMY" OR "FINANCE," TERMINATE

ASK ALL

21. This focus group will require participants to join a videoconference using the Zoom platform using a desktop or laptop computer or a tablet. You will need internet access in a private and quiet location to take part in the study. We cannot provide this technology for you. Will you be able to access the Internet for a 1.5-hour audio-visual discussion using a desktop or laptop computer or tablet?

Yes **CONTINUE**

No **TERMINATE**

NOTE: A MOBILE PHONE WILL NOT WORK FOR THIS EXERCISE

22. The focus group will take place using a video-conference platform called Zoom. If you are not already a user, Zoom may request you to install some software at the site https://zoom.us/download . You can delete it after the focus group if you wish. How experienced and comfortable are you with using Zoom videoconferencing?

Very comfortable 1- **CONTINUE**

Fairly comfortable 2 - **CONTINUE**

Not very comfortable 3 - **TERMINATE**

Very uncomfortable 4 - **TERMINATE**

23. Sometimes participants in the online focus group are also asked to type their responses to questions in the "chat" function. Are you still able to participate? If you need glasses to read or a hearing aid, please remember to have them handy.

Yes **CONTINUE**

No **TERMINATE**

24. I would like to invite you to attend the focus group session where you will exchange your opinions in a moderated discussion with other participants. The session will be recorded, and some other members of the research team may also observe the session, but your participation will be confidential. If you attend the session, you will receive $100 to thank you for your time. It will be sent to you electronically. Do you consent to take part in the focus group? By agreeing to participate you are giving your consent to these procedures.

Yes **CONTINUE**

No **TERMINATE**

25. We will contact you again before the date of the session to confirm your attendance. Note that this invitation is to you personally and you cannot have anyone else substitute for you. Do you consent to this?

Yes **CONTINUE**

No **TERMINATE**

26. The session is about an hour and a half (i.e., 90-minutes), but we are asking that all participants log into the Zoom online meeting 5 minutes prior to the start of the session. Are you able to log-in about 5 minutes prior to the start time?

Yes **CONTINUE**

No **TERMINATE**

Could you please confirm your email address so I can send you login details for the Zoom web conference application?

Email address: _____

PLEASE RE-READ THE FULL ADDRESS BACK TO CONFIRM CORRECT SPELLING.
(NB: We will send the links to you early next week)

PLEASE ENSURE PARTICIPANTS ARE TOLD THE TIME OF SESSION IN THEIR TIME ZONE

SEE TIMES AND DATES ON PAGE 1

INTERVIEWERS: Tell respondent that it is a small group and anyone who does not show or cancels at the last minute will compromise the project. Make sure they know we feel their opinions are valuable and we are serious about finding out what they have to offer.

NOTE: PLEASE TELL ALL RESPONDENTS THAT THEY WILL RECEIVE A CONFIRMATION CALL AND/OR E-MAIL THE DAY PRIOR TO THE SESSION. IF FOR SOME REASON THEY HAVE NOT HEARD FROM US THEY SHOULD CONTACT US AT _____. IF THEIR NAME IS NOT ON THE ATTENDANCE FORM THEY WILL NOT BE ADMITTED TO THE GROUP. IF A RESPONDENT HAS ANY OTHER QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RESEARCH, THEY SHOULD ALSO CONTACT US AT THIS NUMBER.