Office of the
Chief Electoral Officer
of Canada

Retrospective Report on the 42nd General Election of October 19, 2015

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Foreword

I am pleased to present Elections Canada's second report following the 42nd general election. The first report, issued in February 2016, provided a factual narrative of the conduct of the election and painted a portrait of its size and complexity. This retrospective report discusses the results of our post-election assessments. It examines the experience of electors, candidates and election officers, and the feedback provided by returning officers and political parties following the election. It also contains the results of the *Independent Audit Report on the Performance of the Duties and Functions of Election Officials – 42nd General Election*.

Elections Canada had two main objectives for the 42nd general election. The first was to provide Canadians with more convenient and accessible registration and voting services. The second was to maintain Canadians' trust in the electoral system by increasing the agency's capacity to detect and address incidents that could interfere with elector participation, and by improving poll workers' compliance with voting day procedures.

The findings of our review reaffirm the success of the 42nd general election and the progress we made toward achieving our objectives.

Electors knew when, where and the ways to register and vote. They perceived Elections Canada as the most trusted source of election information and did not hesitate to communicate with the agency via a number of channels, including social media, to share their questions, experiences, concerns and complaints.

Evidence indicates that service improvements were successful overall, notably those related to online registration, outreach to younger voters, streamlined procedures at the polls, training for candidates and their officials, and the issuance of written opinions, guidelines and interpretation notes for political entities. Polling locations also had greater levels of accessibility. All of these improvements were generally well received by electors, political entities, returning officers and poll workers. In the end, 96 percent of electors were satisfied with their voting experience.

There was no evidence of any systemic incidents having interfered with voter participation. The vast majority of electors and political entities continued to express confidence in Elections Canada's administration of the election and in the voting results. The independent audit of poll worker performance concluded that, overall, the election was administered in compliance with prescribed procedures. The audit made recommendations for further improvements, including automating certain components of the electoral process and streamlining some of the more complex procedures. Our own findings are consistent with those recommendations.

Despite its success, this election demonstrated in many ways that we have reached the optimal performance that can be achieved under the current electoral management regime.

Many electors and candidates were dissatisfied with long lineups and delays during advance polls, and they openly voiced their expectations for service improvements. A large increase in the number of poll workers was needed to deliver the election in compliance with highly prescriptive and complex legislation that is at times characterized by outdated procedures and controls. Returning officers were challenged to respond to increased voter turnout under a regime that constrains their ability to recruit election workers; provides little flexibility to rapidly scale services to demand; and presents barriers to automation for the most basic, repetitive and tedious tasks.

Elections Canada is already taking action to build on the lessons learned and the successes of the 42nd general election. We are at work on an electoral services modernization agenda that will enhance the experience of electors in the areas of voter information, voter registration and voting services. Later this fall, I will also present my recommendations report to Parliament. It will suggest legislative changes to improve the administration of the *Canada Elections Act* and allow the agency to pursue modernization in response to Canadians' evolving expectations.

It is time to bring federal electoral management into the 21st century.

Marc Mayrand
Chief Electoral Officer of Canada

Introduction

Elections Canada conducts post-election reviews to better understand the experiences of electors, political entities and election workers. It uses this information to continually improve its services so that they keep pace with the changing needs and expectations of Canadians.

Following the 42nd general election, the agency conducted surveys of electors, candidates and election officers, and obtained feedback from returning officers and political parties. Other evaluations measured the effectiveness of the agency's communications program and its impact on elector awareness. As well, Elections Canada collaborated with Statistics Canada to include questions in the Labour Force Survey on voter participation and the reasons why people did not vote. Lastly, as required by recent changes to the *Canada Elections Act*, the agency retained an independent auditor to assess poll worker performance.

Elections Canada gathered and analyzed the results of these evaluations, and the main findings inform this retrospective report, which is organized into four main sections:

1. **Electors' Experience:** This section describes Canadians' level of awareness of the election, their satisfaction with their voting experience and their participation through the various ways to vote.

2. **Political Entities' Experience:** This section reviews the experience of candidates and political parties, describes their satisfaction with Elections Canada's administration of the election, and provides their views on a number of key services.

3. **Integrity and Compliance:** This section presents the results of the agency's activities aimed at maintaining Canadians' trust in the integrity of the electoral process and improving poll workers' compliance with voting day procedures.

4. **Electoral Operations:** This section reviews the challenges presented by a 78-day election calendar and summarizes the feedback that Elections Canada received from returning officers and other election officers.

The report ends with overall conclusions and the key priorities that will guide Elections Canada's work as it prepares for the 43rd general election in 2019.

Supplementary material is included in the appendices. An overview of the major studies referenced in this report, including some insights into the inherent limitations of surveys in general, can be found in Appendix 1. The audit report is contained in Appendix 2. The full survey reports are available on Elections Canada's website.[1]

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[1] See elections.ca > Resource Centre > Research > Post-Election Evaluations.

1. Electors' Experience

In administering elections, Elections Canada strives to ensure that each eligible voter who wishes to vote has the opportunity to do so. It provides electors with reliable information on when, where and the ways to register and vote. It offers accessible and convenient services to make casting a ballot easy.

For the 42nd general election, Elections Canada specifically aimed to:

- enhance electors' awareness of registration and voting information
- provide more ways for electors to make enquiries and complaints
- improve the production, distribution and accuracy of voter information cards
- improve polling place accessibility
- optimize the quality of voters lists
- expand the online services available to electors
- streamline voting operations at the polls to the extent possible within the current legislation

1.1. Elector Awareness

Key Findings

- The vast majority of electors were knowledgeable about the voting process, including registration, ways to vote, voter identification requirements and, to a lesser degree, the online voter registration service.

- Electors knew they could vote on election day but were less aware of other voting options, particularly the options to vote by mail or at an Elections Canada office.

- Electors saw the voter information card as the most important communications piece to facilitate voting.

- Electors perceived Elections Canada as the primary and most trusted source of information on the voting process.

- Online channels emerged as Canadians' preferred ways to communicate with Elections Canada. These included social media, the agency's website and the online voter registration service.

Context

Since the 41st general election, significant changes have been made to the electoral process. These needed to be communicated to the public to raise awareness and mitigate potential confusion about registering and voting.

For example, the 2013 Representation Order added 30 new electoral districts, renamed many others and, at times, changed the district in which electors had previously voted.[2] Amendments to the *Canada Elections Act* tightened voter identification rules and added a fourth day of advance polls. A new online registration service was available for the first time in a general election. In addition, concerns about fraudulent phone calls in the 41st general election required that electors be vigilant in identifying and reporting activities that might undermine their participation in the 42nd general election.

To provide Canadians with reliable and up-to-date information about when, where and the ways to register and vote, Elections Canada rebranded and updated its Electoral Reminder Program. The program used a wide variety of products, formats and channels, including outreach programs, digital communications, a multimedia advertising campaign, direct mail, news media and a public enquiries service. Canadians were advised about the channels they could use to get information from the agency, ask questions, provide feedback and voice their concerns.

This section discusses electors' levels of awareness based on surveys taken at different points during the election.

Electors' knowledge of when, where and ways to register and vote

The majority of electors were knowledgeable about the voting process, including registration, ways to vote, voter identification requirements and, to a lesser degree, the online voter registration service, according to Elections Canada's evaluation of the Electoral Reminder Program.

The evaluation found that elector knowledge of registration and the voting process increased significantly over the course of the election period. Just after the election call, fewer than half of respondents (44 percent) felt well informed about when and where to vote. In the post-election survey, 86 percent indicated that they were well informed on when to vote, and 81 percent on where to vote. Similarly, electors who said they were not registered to vote[3] were asked if they knew how to get registered. Just after the election call, 19 percent were able to identify a way to register. This proportion doubled during the election period to reach 38 percent in the post-election survey.

With respect to the various ways to vote, 62 percent of electors felt well informed in the early weeks of the advertising campaign, and this proportion increased to 73 percent in the post-election survey. By the end of the campaign, 91 percent of electors were aware, when prompted, of the option to vote at an advance poll; 55 percent were aware of the option to vote at a local Elections Canada office; and 42 percent were aware of the option to vote by mail.

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[2] For more information on the redistribution of federal electoral districts and the 2013 Representation Order, see www.redecoupage-federal-redistribution.ca.

[3] A total of 14 percent of respondents at the start of the campaign said that they were not registered, a proportion that dropped to 7 percent in the post-campaign survey.

How electors got informed

In terms of media channels and products used in the communications campaign, electors spontaneously recalled television advertising the most. By the end of the campaign, recall of direct mail, which includes the voter information card and reminder brochure, increased to second-most, followed by newspaper ads. Radio, out-of-home[4] and Internet ads were recalled by fewer electors. When prompted, however, the voter information card appeared to be the communications piece that electors recalled the most.

Over 25.8 million electors whose names appeared on the preliminary lists of electors by September 25, 2015, were mailed a voter information card. Subsequently, 715,000 voter information cards were mailed to electors who were newly registered or had updated their name or address. About 300,000 revised voter information cards were also sent to advise electors of changes to polling place information. Of the 300,000 revised voter information cards, around 129,000 reassigned electors to a closer polling place, 114,000 corrected polling place addresses or other administrative errors, and 57,000 reassigned electors to a new polling place because their initial location was no longer available. In the end, about one percent of voter information cards could not be delivered and were returned to returning officers. In most of these cases, there was a problem related to the elector (moved, unclaimed or refused) or with the mailing address. For about 20 percent of these cases, Elections Canada was able to resolve the problem and issue another voter information card.

Electors saw the voter information card as the most important communications piece to facilitate voting, according to the Electoral Reminder Program evaluation. Some 90 percent of electors recalled receiving a voter information card (compared to 91 percent in 2011 and 89 percent in 2008), according to the Survey of Electors. Of those, almost all (97 percent) indicated that their name was correct, which is the same as in 2011 and 2008. A similar proportion (98 percent) said their voter information card had their correct address (unchanged from 2011 and 2008). Additionally, among electors who received a voter information card and voted, 89 percent brought it with them when they went to vote, up from 83 percent in both 2011 and 2008.

While the main source of information about the electoral process remained the voter information card and traditional media (e.g. television, radio and newspapers), electors also took advantage of the new opportunity to interact with Elections Canada on social media in both official languages.

Centralized Production of Voter Information Cards

For the 42nd general election, Elections Canada introduced a centralized and streamlined approach to the production and delivery of voter information cards.

This faster process allowed the agency to print and send out for delivery 90 percent of all cards four days before the deadline.

This new process also saved $3 million compared with the 41st general election.

Following the election, returning officers provided positive feedback on the new approach.

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[4] This refers to ads on public transit, campus digital screens and Tim Hortons TV screens.

Elections Canada's Facebook posts reached over 13 million users, its Twitter messages earned over 17 million impressions, and its YouTube videos were viewed around 700,000 times. Electors sent over 23,000 messages to Elections Canada on social media, and the agency posted some 4,600 messages. Social media activity was primarily information driven—Elections Canada answered questions from electors, referred them to the website or the toll-free public enquires line for more information, or directed them to the online complaint form to register a formal complaint.

Electors perceived Elections Canada as a key source of voting information, and that perception increased steadily throughout the communications campaign. Recognition of Elections Canada as the top-of-mind source for information on the voting process rose from 34 to 45 percent during the election, marking a significant improvement over the 30 percent observed following the 41st general election. Electors' perceptions of Elections Canada as the most trusted source of information about the electoral process also rose from 60 to 70 percent throughout the campaign.

1.2. Voter Registration

Key Findings

- Most electors were already registered on the preliminary lists of electors. As a result, most acknowledged receiving a voter information card that confirmed their registration and gave them the information they needed to vote.

- Younger electors benefited from outreach efforts aimed at ensuring they were registered to vote before election day. Despite the success of reaching out to this population group, youth aged 18 to 34 remain under-represented on voters lists when compared to other age groups.

- Canadians' response to online voter registration was positive, particularly among younger electors.

- A percentage of electors continue to rely on the convenience of registering and voting at the polls, as indicated by the modest reduction in election day registrations between 2011 and 2015 (6.2 to 5.8 percent of all election day voters).

Context

Producing accurate voters lists that include all of the eligible population is a core component of electoral management. Accurate lists greatly improve plans for voting day services. By knowing how many electors will potentially vote at each polling station, returning officers are able to adjust staffing and supplies to meet demand. Larger polling divisions may be split in two (or more) to improve services and avoid lineups. Likewise, voting day supplies, ranging from ballots to registration forms, are allocated based on the number of electors on the preliminary lists.

Poll workers rely on the lists to verify that electors are duly registered when they show up at the polls. Accurate lists decrease the risk of administrative errors that can occur when electors are manually registered at the polls, which is a more complex procedure. As well, voters lists are used by political parties to connect with electors before and during elections.

Registration is also an opportunity to engage younger Canadians in the electoral process and make it easier for them to participate, given the absence of systematic youth registration in Canada. Legally, Elections Canada cannot obtain or store data on Canadian citizens until they turn 18 and become eligible to vote. This means the agency must increase its efforts to register younger electors just before and during elections, so they receive a voter information card with all the basic information needed to vote.

Leading up to the 42nd general election, Elections Canada sought to maximize the quality of voters lists and reduce last-minute registrations by:

- taking full advantage of external data sources to make regular updates to the National Register of Electors and improving registration and revision services

- increasing outreach to youth so they could register and fully participate in the election, many for the first time

The 42nd general election was also the first in which electors could register online. While the service had been available in a limited number of by-elections, it had never before been used simultaneously from coast to coast during a general election.

National Register of Electors

Elections Canada uses the National Register of Electors[5] to produce the preliminary lists of electors at the start of an election. The quality of the Register has steadily improved since its creation in 1997. Elector information is continually updated between elections via regular data exchanges with authorized federal and provincial sources, such as the Canada Revenue Agency; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada; provincial and territorial vital statistics registrars; most driver's licence bureaus; and provincial and territorial election agencies with permanent registers.

As the 42nd general election approached, and for about a month into the campaign, Elections Canada made significant efforts to maximize the quality of data in the Register. The agency incorporated elector data from recent provincial and territorial elections; sequenced its data intake from external sources and online registration to reflect recent changes, such as summer moves; and asked returning officers to review elector information locally.

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[5] Details about the National Register of Electors can be found at elections.ca > Voters > Voter Registration > Description of the National Register of Electors.

The early election call impacted this process, but the Register continued to be updated during August and early September. Information for over 500,000 new electors and updates for approximately 1.9 million others were transmitted to local returning officers for their review and approval. These changes reflected the single largest improvement to list quality during the election period.

Between 2011 and 2015, Elections Canada also sent some 1.76 million letters to potential electors, inviting them to register or to confirm their name and address in the national database. In September 2015, a mailing was sent to some 52,000 unregistered 18-year-olds, inviting them to register using the online voter registration service. Some 21 percent of recipients did so.

Registration during the election

The vast majority of electors (88 percent) knew that they needed to be on the voters list prior to voting, according to the Survey of Electors. During an election, electors can register at their local Elections Canada office, use online registration, respond to Elections Canada's targeted revision efforts or simply register when they vote. Of those who reported having to register for the 42nd general election (3 percent), the vast majority (88 percent) were satisfied with the registration method they used.

Local offices and targeted revision

As in previous elections, electors could register with their local Elections Canada office in person or over the phone. Returning officers also sent revising agents to conduct targeted revision in high density, highly mobile or new residential areas, focusing primarily on areas where greater numbers of registrations and revisions had been observed in the 41st general election. Some 503,000 electors' information was added to the voters lists or updated using local office services, including around 166,500 through targeted revision.

Online registration

For the 42nd general election, Elections Canada promoted its online voter registration service, which was launched in 2012. The popularity of the online service grew exponentially after the call of the election. Online transactions accounted for 301,000 (or 37 percent) of all registration updates completed during the revision period. This included some 107,000 new registrations. Of these new registrants, 55 percent were electors aged 18 to 24 and 30 percent were aged 25 to 44. Transactions also included 193,000 changes of address, resulting in increased accuracy of the lists. An additional 14,000 Canadians made other corrections to their elector information. Those who were visited by revising agents during the targeted revision efforts were also able to register or update their name and address.

Electronic Signatures

Until early 2015, the online registration service was unavailable to electors who had not already explicitly consented to be added to the Register because the *Canada Elections Act* required their signature. This affected younger electors in particular.

After the passage of Bill C-23 in December 2014, electronic signatures became legally valid for voter registration transactions. As a result, many more electors could register using the agency's online registration service.

Some electors experienced difficulties with the online registration service if they had unconventional address types. This included people on reserves, where civic addresses are not always used. As well, new electors could not use the service to register for the first time, unless Elections Canada had already received their name and address from one of its data-sharing partners. Among those who could not complete a registration transaction online, 77,000 downloaded a registration certificate to allow for faster registration at their polling place.

Use of the online registration service, especially by electors aged 18 to 44, demonstrated Canadians' growing comfort with online services.

Election day registration

In the 42nd general election, despite efforts to improve the quality of voters lists in advance, some 777,000 electors registered or updated their information at their polling place on election day. The proportion of registration transactions completed on election day decreased by a modest 0.4 percentage points between 2011 and 2015 (from 6.2 to 5.8 percent of all election day voters). This indicates that many electors continue to prefer the "one-stop-shop" approach of registering and voting at the same time. The significant increase in participation—particularly among groups that are traditionally less engaged—likely also contributed to the registration rate on election day.

Quality of the final lists of electors

Overall, 2.5 million revisions were processed during the election, including election day registrations. This is about 1 million more revisions than in the 41st general election. The quality indicators for the final lists of electors improved during the 42nd general election, as illustrated below. Coverage[6] increased by one percentage point, from 93.5 percent to 94.5 percent; currency[7] increased by three percentage points, from 85.5 percent to 88.3 percent; and accuracy[8] increased by two percentage points, from 91.4 percent to 93.5 percent.

Preliminary and Final Lists of Electors Quality Indicators (2011–2015)

■ Preliminary lists (August 1, 2015) ■ Final lists (October 19, 2015)

	Coverage		Currency		Accuracy	
	2011	2015	2011	2015	2011	2015
Final lists	93.5	94.5	85.5	88.3	91.4	93.5
Preliminary lists	92.6	92.7	83.5	84.2	90.2	90.9

(%)

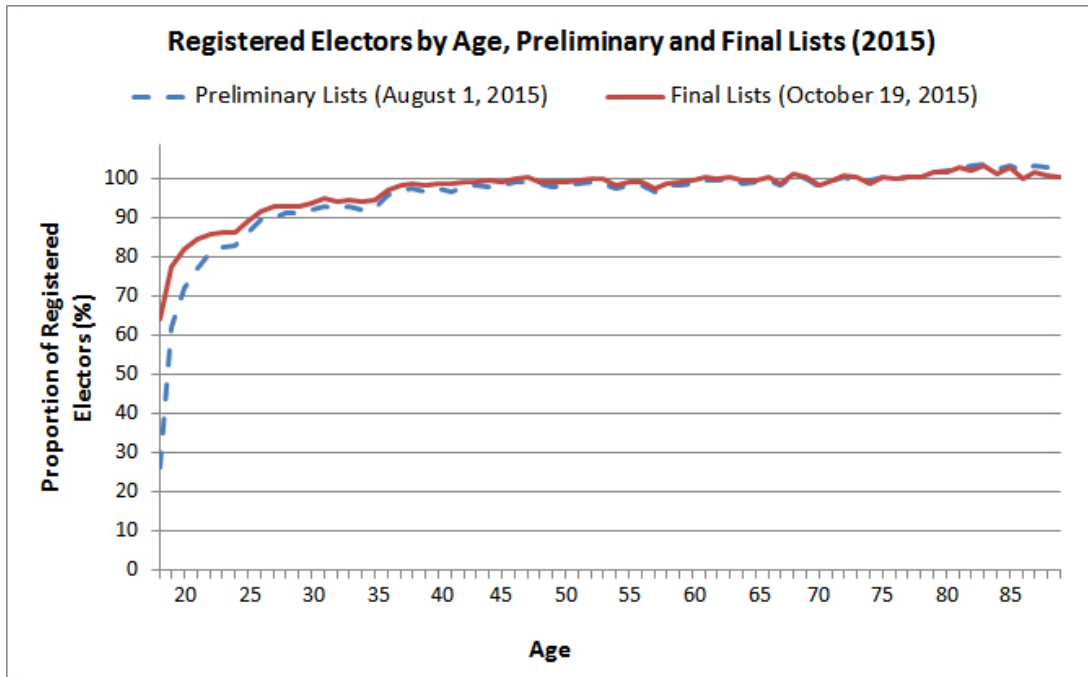Election Year/Quality Indicator

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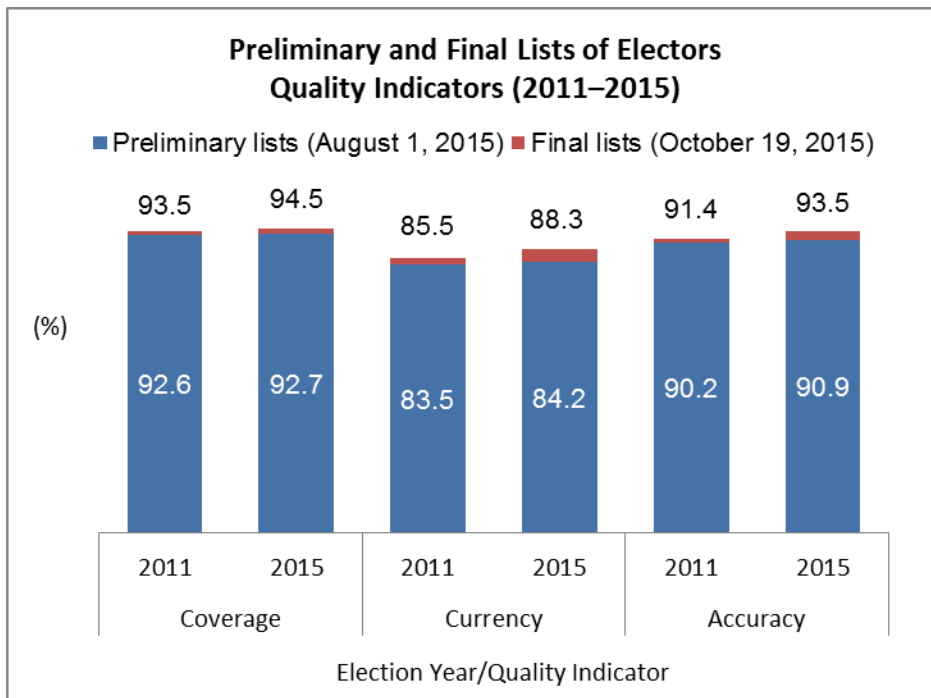
[6] Coverage is the proportion of eligible electors (Canadian citizens aged 18 and over) who are registered.
[7] Currency is the proportion of eligible electors who are registered at their current address.
[8] Accuracy is the proportion of registered electors who are listed at their current address.

The following graph compares the number of electors on preliminary and final voters lists by age. It reveals that Canadians aged 18 to 34 benefited the most from registration and revision activities during the election. It also indicates that, despite successful outreach to this age group, youth aged 18 to 34 remain registered at a lower rate than older electors. For example, among 18-year-olds, registration rates went from 27 percent at the call of the election to 65 percent on election day, an increase of 38 percentage points. That said, only a little over 60 percent of 18-year-olds were registered on the final voters lists, compared to levels that exceed 90 percent[9] for other age groups.

Registered Electors by Age, Preliminary and Final Lists (2015)

– – Preliminary Lists (August 1, 2015)   —— Final Lists (October 19, 2015)

Proportion of Registered Electors (%) — *Age*

[9] Over-coverage (registration rates exceeding 100 percent) observed among older electors typically occurs because of a lag between the death of some electors and the removal of their names from the list.

Preferred ways to register

When looking at the various ways people registered, some interesting patterns emerge across age groups. Registration through returning officers, which includes additions and updates during the revision period, was the most common channel for all age groups, particularly among older electors. Younger electors were more inclined to register either on election day or online, two methods that were less predominant among older groups. Registering at the advance polls was the least popular method, particularly among the youngest groups, but was still more popular than online registration among the two eldest groups (65 and older combined). It should be noted that only 3 percent of electors who voted at an advance poll registered at the same time.

Ways to Register by Age Group (2015)

Proportion of registrations (%)

	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55-64	65–74	75+
■ By returning officer	45.4%	47.9%	53.0%	55.2%	57.1%	61.4%	77.6%
■ On election day	34.8%	32.8%	32.0%	31.4%	27.8%	23.9%	17.0%
■ Online	16.5%	15.8%	11.2%	9.0%	8.4%	5.8%	1.4%
■ At advance polls	3.3%	3.5%	3.7%	4.4%	6.7%	8.9%	4.0%

Age groups
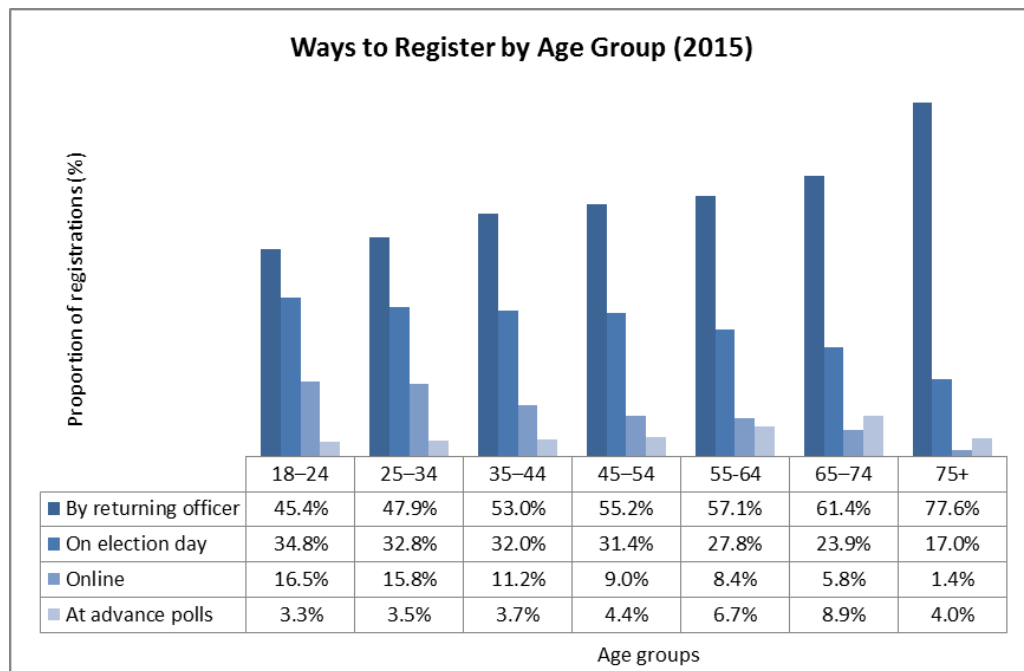
1.3. Voting Experience

Key Findings

- For the vast majority of electors, voting in the 42nd general election was straightforward and administered without any difficulties.

- Canadians' use of advance polls exceeded Elections Canada's forecasts as electors increasingly turn to alternative voting methods.

- Voters encountered longer voting times at advance polls and were less satisfied with their experience than those who voted on election day. A combination of factors, including higher than anticipated turnout and complex administrative requirements at advance polls, contributed to this situation.

- Electors with disabilities continued to encounter challenges with physical access to the polls. Some found that the tools and aids offered were insufficient to permit independent voting.

- Some electors continued to have difficulties proving their address, which affects their right to vote.

Context

Convenient and accessible ways to vote help Canadian citizens aged 18 and older exercise this fundamental right. Elections Canada aims to reduce barriers, especially for groups that may experience particular challenges, to ensure that every elector who wishes to vote can do so.

Elections Canada was mindful of a number of socio-demographic trends in the lead-up to the 42nd general election. These included the aging of the general population; the high mobility of Canadians, which results in many being away from home on election day; and the fact that a growing number of electors are limited in their daily activities due to a disability.[10] In addition, and as discussed in its evaluations of the previous two general elections, the agency remained concerned that voting presents more difficulty for some groups of electors than for the general population, particularly because of the requirement to prove address.

Given these considerations, Elections Canada sought in the 42nd general election to:

- improve the accessibility of Elections Canada offices and polling places
- implement the fourth day of advance voting introduced by recent amendments to the *Canada Elections Act*
- clarify the voter identification rules

This section discusses electors' overall voting experience; the different ways electors voted; accessibility of polling locations, including ongoing challenges related to physical access and independent voting; electors' experience with meeting voter identification requirements; and their satisfaction with services in Canada's two official languages.

Overall experience

Almost all voters (96 percent) were satisfied with their voting experience (with 81 percent being very satisfied and 15 percent being somewhat satisfied), according to the Survey of Electors. Comparisons to previous elections are not available for this specific metric.

Almost all voters (95 percent) said that it was convenient for them to vote. The vast majority of voters (97 percent) indicated that they found it easy to vote, compared with 99 percent in both the 41st and 40th general elections. The vast majority (97 percent) were satisfied with the services provided by poll workers, in line with 98 percent observed in both the 41st and 40th general elections.

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[10] An estimated 3.8 million adult Canadians reported being limited in their daily activities due to a disability in 2012, according to the Canadian Survey on Disability, Statistics Canada, 2012.

Preferred way to vote

The majority of voters (76 percent) cast their ballot on election day, while 21 percent voted at advance polls and three percent voted by special ballot (either by mail or at an Elections Canada office). Voting on election day remains the most common way to vote, though it continues to follow a downward trend as voting at advance polls increases significantly. Over the last five elections, the proportion of votes cast at advance polls compared to other voting options has more than doubled, from 9 percent in 2004 to 21 percent in 2015.

Trend in Turnout by Voting Methods (2004 to 2015)

■ Polling day   ■ Advance polls   ■ Special ballots

Election Year	Special ballots	Advance polls	Polling day
2004	1.8	9.2	89.0
2006	3.0	10.5	86.5
2008	1.8	11.0	87.2
2011	1.9	14.3	83.8
2015	3.5	20.8	75.8

Proportion of Votes (%)
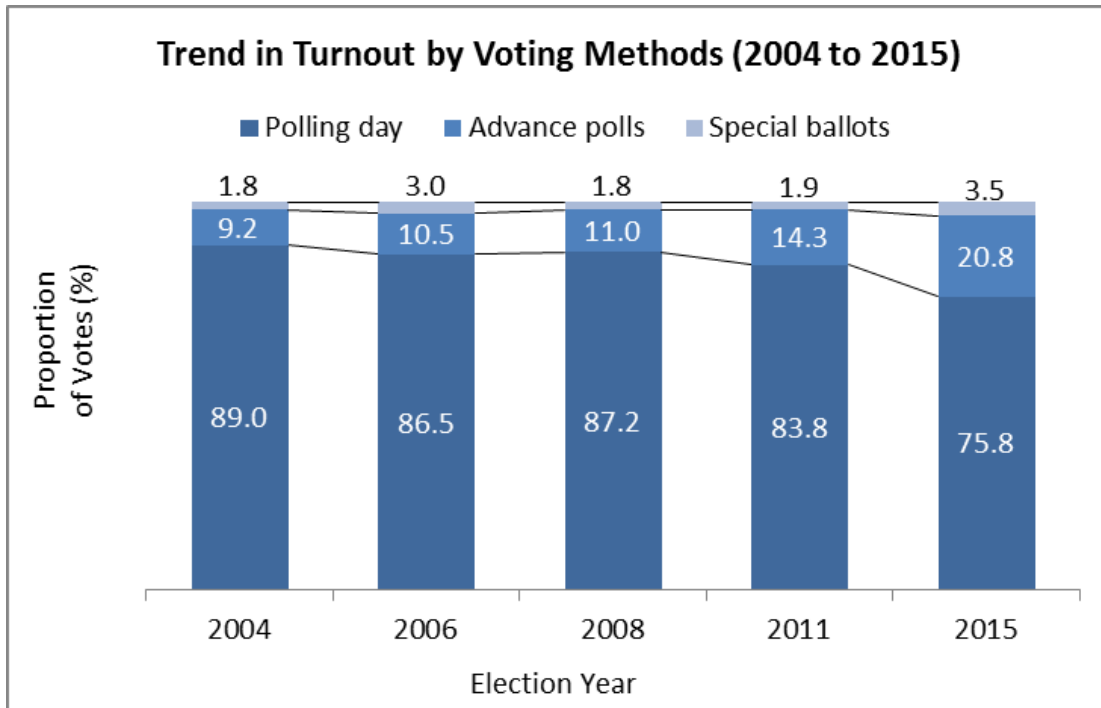
Absentee voters and special ballot offices

For the 42nd general election, Elections Canada opened offices in select institutions across the country to make voting by special ballot more accessible to certain target groups, including youth and Aboriginal electors. The Special Voting Rules Expansion (SVRE) pilot project had three main objectives:

- to improve accessibility of the voting process by physically locating voting services closer to electors
- to increase electors' awareness of their voting options
- to measure how well the service format would integrate into the current electoral process

Elections Canada opened 71 additional assistant returning offices at 39 post-secondary institutions, 13 Friendship Centres and two community centres from October 5 to 8, 2015. A total of 70,231 electors used these offices to vote either within or, for the most part, outside of their electoral district (78 percent). This turnout accounted for about 9 percent of the total targeted population, which compares well with similar initiatives by provincial election agencies.

As evidenced in feedback from various sources, this initiative was well received. The vast majority of voters who completed an exit survey reported that these offices offered a more convenient way to vote. Many students commented that Elections Canada should make this service available during every general election. Overall, returning officers and other stakeholders considered the SVRE initiative to be worthwhile. They recommended expanding the service to more offices, over more days, in the next election. As a result, Elections Canada will examine various scenarios for expanding the initiative and make recommendations for future implementation.

Time it took electors to vote

On average, voters estimated that they spent around 12 minutes at their polling location, according to the Survey of Electors. Significant variations were observed by voting method: on average, electors reported spending 9 minutes at a polling place on election day, 21 minutes at an advance poll, and 19 minutes at a local Elections Canada office. These first-time results provide a baseline to measure the impact of future improvements.

The vast majority of voters (92 percent) who cast their ballot at a polling place felt that the wait time was reasonable, compared with 97 percent in 2011. Advance poll voters were less satisfied with the wait times (80 percent were satisfied), compared with those who voted on election day (96 percent) or at a local Elections Canada office (91 percent). Candidates surveyed after the election also mentioned the long lineups at the polls as one of their main sources of concern.

It should be noted that each voting method involves different procedures and requirements. These contribute to the time it takes to vote and, consequently, to wait times during peak hours. For example, before the regular ballots showing the names of all candidates are printed, people voting at an Elections Canada office have to write the full name of their chosen candidate on a special ballot. During advance polls, poll workers need to write down each elector's name and address on a record and have the elector sign it before issuing a ballot. They also tick a box on the record once the elector has voted.

As well, because overall attendance during advance polls is much lower than on election day, fewer advance polls are set up. Each advance poll has the potential to serve over 10 times more electors than election day polls. For instance, advance polls in urban and rural areas may serve up to 6,000 and 3,500 electors respectively, whereas polls on election day serve between 400 and 325 electors respectively. Elections Canada had observed the growing trend of advance voting in past elections and planned accordingly for 2015. However, attendance at advance polls was still significantly higher than anticipated.

Responding to the needs of electors with disabilities

In early 2014, Elections Canada established its Advisory Group for Disability Issues with a mandate to provide subject matter expertise on accessibility and feedback on projects and service improvements for the 42nd general election. Members were asked to document their election experience in a journal and share their feedback after the election. They reported being satisfied with many accessibility improvements, particularly efforts to make polling places more accessible. Members noted that further improvements to support independent voting for electors with disabilities remained a key priority for them.

In the run-up to the 42nd general election, Elections Canada requested that returning officers secure polling places with level access and other accessibility features. In 2015, the new accessibility checklist featured 35 accessibility criteria, 15 of which were mandatory.[11] The accessibility details of each polling place were available online during the election and were summarized on the voter information card mailed to every registered elector. In addition, improved accessibility services and tools were available at polling places to assist electors with disabilities in voting.[12]

As indicated in Elections Canada's first report on the 42nd general election, 96 percent of polling places met all 15 mandatory criteria (which includes level access). Another 1.7 percent provided level access, but did not meet the other 14 criteria and could not be modified. These efforts were complemented with improved training for election workers and modernized accessibility feedback mechanisms for electors and workers alike. Elections Canada further committed to using polling places that had an automatic door opener or, where the location did not have such a device, having a staff person at the door during voting hours.

Among electors with disabilities, 43 percent were aware of the accessibility services and tools that were available to them, according to the Survey of Electors. Five percent indicated that they visited the Accessible Voting page on Elections Canada's website during the election, and two percent indicated that they had used the Voter Information Service on the website to check the accessibility of their polling place. Feedback from electors with disabilities who took part in the Electoral Reminder Program evaluation indicated that the accessibility of information could be further improved.

Just under two thirds (63 percent) of electors with disabilities indicated that their voter information card was useful in checking the level of accessibility at their designated polling place, while 14 percent did not find the voter information card to be useful in that respect.

> ### Candidates' Views on Polling Place Accessibility
>
> The majority of candidates (64 percent) were satisfied with the locations chosen for advance polls and election day, according to the Survey of Candidates. This is slightly lower than the 67 percent satisfaction rate observed in both the 41st and 40th general elections. Dissatisfaction was mainly related to distance, accessibility problems and an insufficient number of advance polling places.
>
> While fewer candidates (20 percent) reported problems with the accessibility of election day polling places in 2015 than in previous elections (32 percent in 2011 and 41 percent in 2008), their assessment for advance polls remained stable.

Anecdotal evidence from various sources indicated that accessibility information on the voter information card was not always entirely accurate, resulting in situations where electors' accessibility requirements were not met.

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[11] More information on the accessibility checklist is available at elections.ca > Voters > Information for People with Disabilities.

[12] More information on accessible voting tools and services is available at elections.ca > Voters > Information for People with Disabilities.

Overall, voters with disabilities felt that Elections Canada staff was sensitive to their needs when they voted (84 percent), and those who needed assistance (14 respondents) were in general satisfied with the level of support they received. However, about one third of voters with disabilities (32 percent) who visited a local Elections Canada office or a polling place stated that signs with a wheelchair symbol were not visible. Some focus group participants, as part of the Electoral Reminder Program evaluation, reported receiving poor service from Elections Canada staff when they went to vote. Examples included staff not providing appropriate direction to blind voters and not allowing sufficient privacy when voters were casting a ballot. Participants ascribed these experiences to election workers not having received adequate training on accessibility services.

Polling locations

Virtually all voters (99 percent) reported no difficulty in reaching their polling location, regardless of the way they voted, compared with 98 percent in 2011. In 2015, this proportion was 96 percent among voters with disabilities. Of the few voters (32 respondents) who reported difficulties in reaching their poll, the most common issues were finding the polling station itself, the physical accessibility of the polling place or its imprecise signage. Participants who took part in focus groups to evaluate the Electoral Reminder Program identified similar concerns, as well as the need for chairs to accommodate people who are unable to stand for long periods of time.

Almost all voters (97 percent) who cast their ballot at an advance poll, on election day or at an Elections Canada office indicated that the polling location was a convenient distance from their home, which was the same in 2011 and 96 percent in 2008.

Despite these high satisfaction rates, Elections Canada is aware that some polling places were less than conveniently located for some electors. This will be considered in the planning for future general elections.

Voter identification at the polls

In preparing for the 42nd general election, Elections Canada reviewed its voter identification policy to both clarify the rules for electors and help poll workers implement them. As part of this exercise, the Chief Electoral Officer authorized additional pieces of identification that electors could use, mainly in response to challenges certain groups encountered with identification requirements in previous elections.

The vast majority of electors (97 percent) were aware that they needed to prove their identity to vote, according to the Survey of Electors. This was unchanged from 2011 and similar to 2008 (94 percent). However, fewer knew about the requirement to prove their address (88 percent). This is consistent with the previous two general elections. The Electoral Reminder Program evaluation revealed that electors' knowledge of the need to prove one's identity and address increased significantly over the course of the campaign.

Virtually all voters (99 percent) felt that it was easy to meet the identification requirements, according to the Survey of Electors, compared to 97 percent in both 2011 and 2008. Almost everyone who voted (99 percent) said they had the required identification with them when they went to vote. This proportion was unchanged from 2011 and was 98 percent in 2008.

Among the three options for proving identity and address at the polls, the vast majority of voters (93 percent) said they used a single piece of identification showing their name, address and photograph. Most voters (91 percent) reported using a driver's licence, compared with 90 percent in 2011 and 2008.

About 3 percent of the general population used the second option of showing two documents, both with their name and at least one with their address. Less than 1 percent used the third option, which involved showing two documents with their name and having another elector attest to their address.

As in the previous two elections, problems with voter identification at the polls were more often related to proof of address. The Labour Force Survey after the 42nd general election asked non-voters why they did not vote. In terms of reasons related to the electoral process, the inability to prove identity or address was the main reason cited (2.7 percent) and was more often cited among those aged 18 to 24 (4.6 percent). Based on estimations from the survey, that amounts to approximately 172,700 electors. Among them, some 49,600 (28.7 percent) said they went to the polling station, but did not vote because they were not able to prove their identity and address. Approximately 39 percent of that group were aged 18 to 34. Election officers' feedback confirmed these findings, as 10 percent reported problems in verifying electors' identity and almost twice as many (19 percent) in verifying address.

In the 41st general election, Elections Canada accepted the voter information card as a piece of identification at polling stations in seniors' residences, long-term care facilities, First Nations reserves and on-campus student residences. Legislative changes introduced prior to the 42nd general election prohibited the use of the voter information card as identification. Nevertheless, some voters continue to believe that they can use it and report having used it as a piece of identification (11 percent in 2015, compared to 14 percent in 2011 and 3 percent in 2008). This is likely because electors are encouraged to bring the card with them to the polling place and show it to workers when they arrive so they can be directed to the right table. The Chief Electoral Officer provided clarification on this topic during a news conference in September 2015 and on other occasions.

Candidates' Views on the Voter Identification Process

Twenty-five percent of candidates witnessed problems related to the voter identification requirements in 2015, according to the Survey of Candidates. This compares with 26 percent in 2011 and 37 percent in 2008.

The top three problems reported were an inconsistent interpretation of the rules or staff confusion about what identification to accept; electors having trouble proving their identity; and electors not being able to vote as a result of the voter identification requirements.

Of all formal complaints received by Elections Canada during the 42nd general election, 5.5 percent were related to identification requirements at the polls. More specifically, some electors complained that poll workers would request specific pieces of identification (typically a driver's licence or other photo identification). Other electors, among whom were students, seniors and people with disabilities, reported difficulties satisfying identification requirements. Still others were frustrated that their voter information card or another document would not be accepted as valid identification.

Official languages

Elections Canada is committed to providing high-quality service to electors in both official languages. The agency made significant efforts before and during the 42nd general election to implement measures that responded to the audit report of the Commissioner of Official Languages, which was released in July 2015.[13]

Looking at all voting methods combined, 78 percent of voters were served in English and 21 percent were served in French, according to the Survey of Electors. This ratio was 75 to 25 in 2011. Virtually all voters (99 percent) were satisfied with the language in which they were served, which is comparable to 2011 and 2008.

During the election period, 134 complaints were filed in relation to official languages. Of these complaints, 109 (81 percent) were received through Elections Canada's online complaint form or incident reports from election officers. The other 25 complaints (19 percent) were lodged with the Commissioner of Official Languages. The majority reported a lack of services, signage or availability of documents in French at Elections Canada offices or polling places.

Elections Canada reviewed each complaint to determine whether or not the agency was in compliance with the action plan that it made in response to the audit.[14] In the majority of cases, the agency determined that returning officers had complied with policies, but that procedures were not always well executed by poll workers. The Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages shared its investigation reports in August 2016, and Elections Canada is taking steps to address the proposed recommendations.

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[13] The Commissioner of Official Languages' audit report is available at www.ocol-clo.gc.ca/en/publications/audits/2015/electionscanada.
[14] Elections Canada's action plan is part of the Commissioner of Official Languages' audit report.

Complaints

Key Findings

- As a result of expanding its feedback channels, centralizing its complaints management framework and widely promoting how electors could communicate with Elections Canada, the agency received 17,200 complaints during the 42nd general election. This amounted to about six per 10,000 electors—a significant increase over the 41st general election.

- Overall, 45 percent of complaints were related to services at the polls, with the top three categories being lineups at the advance polls, the application of voting procedures and the voter identification requirements.

- Another 18 percent of complaints related to accessibility issues.

- Elections Canada improved its capacity to respond to complaints from electors. Complaints were triaged and those impacting the right to vote were generally addressed the same day; all others were responded to within five months.

In 2015, complaints could be lodged with Elections Canada headquarters using an online form, by telephone, by email or by regular mail. Electors also had the option to lodge a complaint at a local office or at their polling place. The agency actively encouraged electors to provide feedback, especially in light of integrity concerns after the 41st general election.

Volume of complaints

Elections Canada received some 17,000 complaints in relation to the 42nd general election, which represents about 6 complaints per 10,000 electors.

The volume of elector complaints was significantly higher than in the 41st general election, which drew 3,800 complaints. Elections Canada had anticipated and prepared for such an increase as a result of encouraging electors to provide feedback, including on social media.
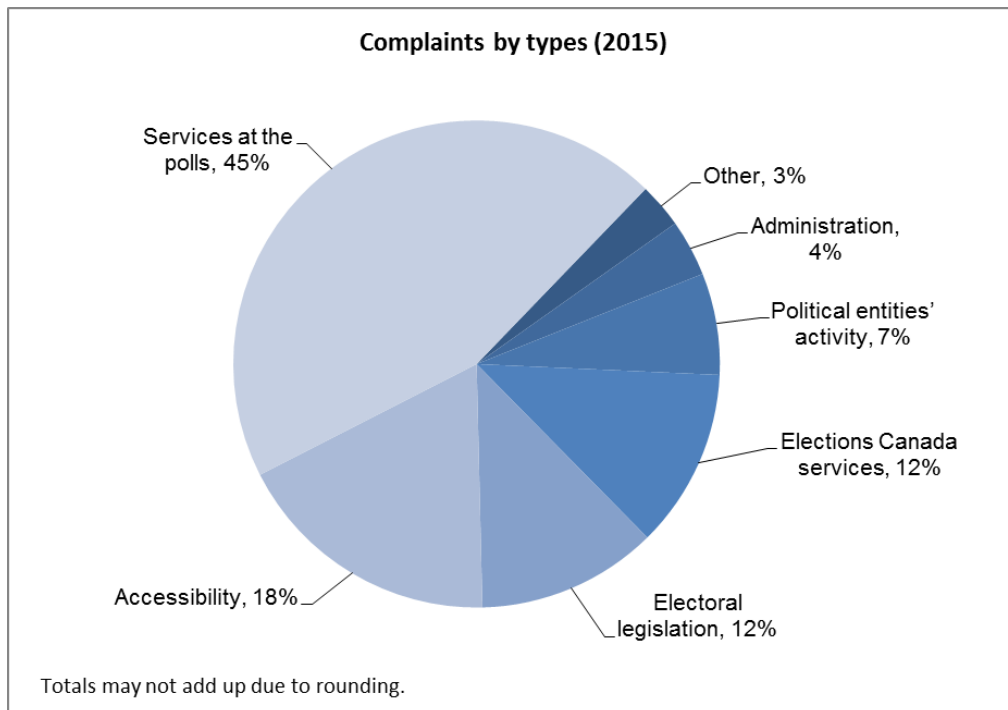
Elections Canada's Definition of a Complaint

Elections Canada defines a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction in regard to:

- the products or services provided by Elections Canada

- the way in which services were provided by Elections Canada

- the inappropriate conduct of a person or group in the electoral process

Nature of complaints

The majority of electors (75 percent) who filed complaints reported issues with the services they received. Of those complaints, 45 percent related to services at the polls and 18 percent related to accessibility for electors with disabilities. The latter complaints are detailed in the first report on the 42nd general election.[15] Another 12 percent of complaints related to central services provided by Elections Canada headquarters, such as communications (telephone and website), voter registration, special ballot voting and the voter information card.

Complaints by types (2015)

- Services at the polls, 45%
- Other, 3%
- Administration, 4%
- Political entities' activity, 7%
- Elections Canada services, 12%
- Electoral legislation, 12%
- Accessibility, 18%

Totals may not add up due to rounding.

About 12 percent of complaints related to the electoral legislation or potential offences. Seven percent had to do with political entities' activities, such as campaigning methods (e.g. by telephone or unsolicited emails), campaign sign location and campaign activities taking place on election day. Lastly, four percent touched on administrative matters, most commonly about poll worker employment.

Complaints were given the highest priority when an individual's right to vote was at stake. In order to maximize the chances that complainants would be able to vote, the triage unit often replied to high-priority complaints immediately by providing the address of the polling place or the telephone number to contact the returning officer.

Complaints related to a potential offence under the *Canada Elections Act* were referred to the Commissioner of Canada Elections for further investigation. Complaints related to potential offences involving voter contact calling services were referred to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission.

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[15] See section 2.4 in the *Report on the 42nd General Election of October 19, 2015* at elections.ca > Resource Centre > Reports > Elections Canada's Official Reports.

It took approximately 5 months in total to respond to all complaints in 2015, compared to approximately 11 months in 2011. This marks a significant step in service improvements.
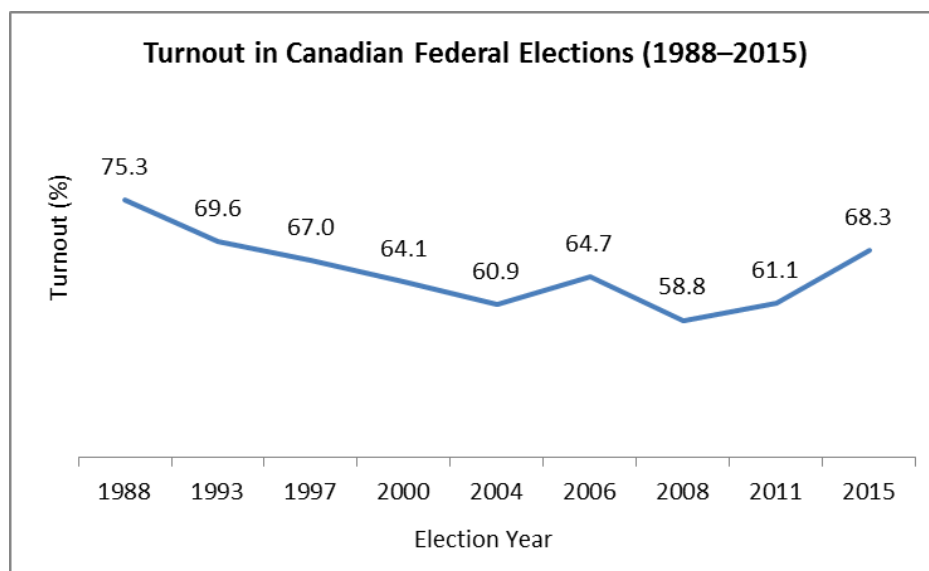
1.4. Voter Participation

Key Findings

- Voter participation in the 42nd general election was at its highest in 20 years.

- Increases in voter participation among the youngest electors and those living on First Nations reserves were approximately double that of the population as a whole.

- The gap in participation rates of electors living on First Nations reserves and the population as a whole has been decreasing since the 2008 election.

- Electors' reasons for not voting have remained constant over the last three elections, with reasons related to the electoral process being a distant third behind everyday life issues and political issues.

Context

Voter participation is a key indicator of the overall health of the federal electoral process. This section provides information on voter turnout, voting trends, turnout on First Nations reserves and reasons for not voting.

Overall voter turnout

Voter turnout was at its highest in 20 years, with 68.3 percent of registered electors casting a ballot. This is an increase of seven percentage points over the 41st general election, and 10 percentage points over the 40th general election.

Turnout in Canadian Federal Elections (1988–2015)

Turnout (%)

Election Year	
1988	75.3
1993	69.6
1997	67.0
2000	64.1
2004	60.9
2006	64.7
2008	58.8
2011	61.1
2015	68.3

Voting trends by age group

While voter turnout went up among all age groups in 2015,[16] the largest increases were observed among youth under 35. For the youngest group, aged 18 to 24, turnout went from 39 percent in 2011 to 57 percent in 2015 (an increase of 18 percentage points). Among those aged 25 to 34, it went from 45 percent to 57 percent over the same period (an increase of 12 percentage points).[17]

Estimated Voter Turnout by Age Group (2004–2015)
(Based on electoral population)

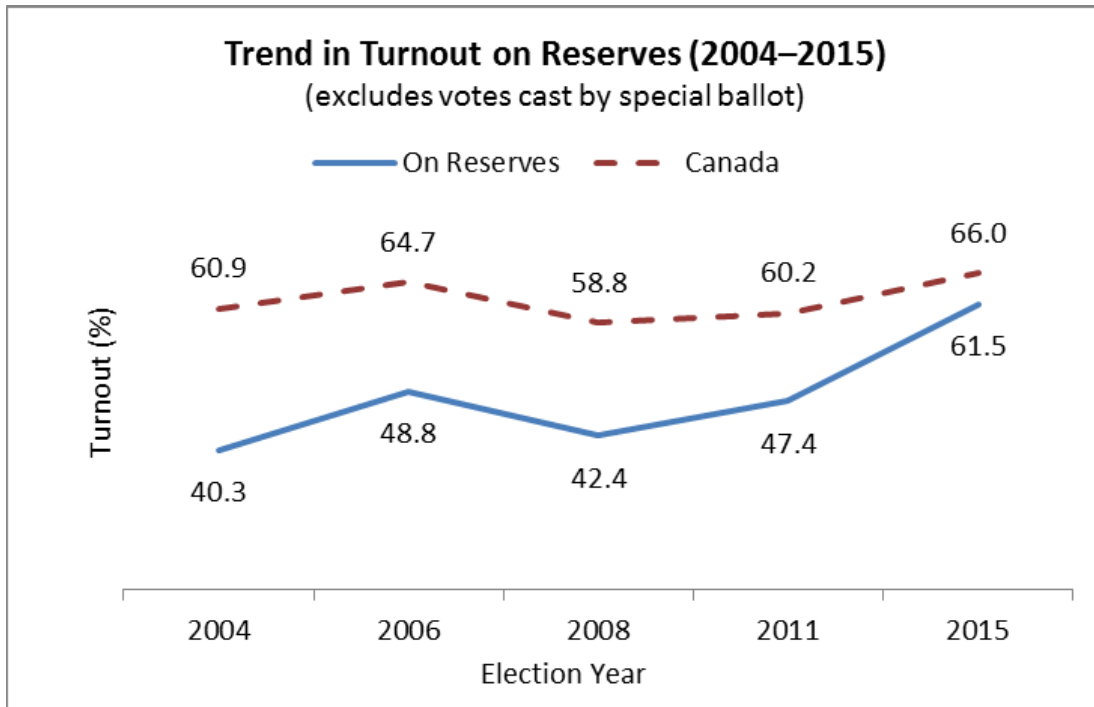|	2004	2006	2008	2011	2015
18–24	37.3	43.8	37.4	38.8	57.1
25–34	44.3	49.9	48.0	45.1	57.4
35–44	54.9	61.8	53.9	54.5	61.9
45–54	66.4	70.2	59.7	64.5	66.6
55–64	73.4	75.5	65.6	71.5	73.7
65–74	76.0	77.7	68.4	75.1	78.8
75+	64.3	61.8	67.3	60.3	67.4
All	58.5	62.8	56.5	58.5	66.1

Election Year

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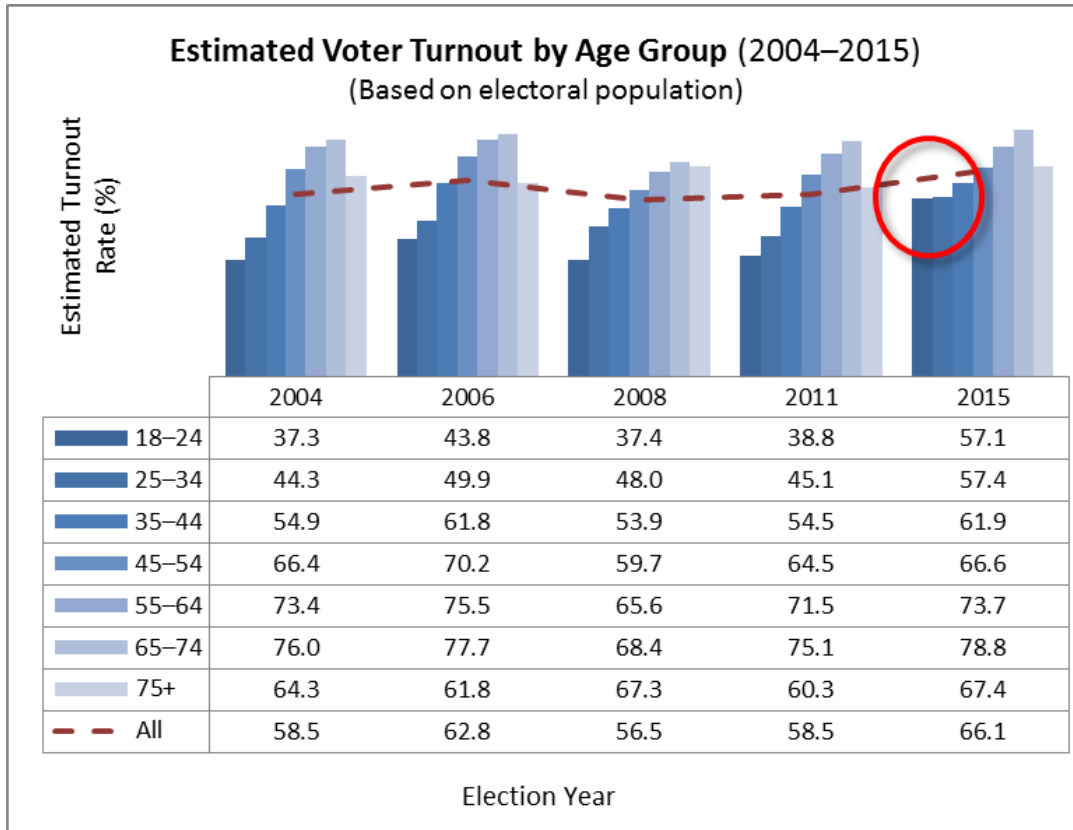
[16] The numbers presented in the figure below are based on the population of *eligible* electors, as opposed to the population of *registered* electors that is used to calculate the official voting results. This explains the gap between the official voter turnout of 68.3 percent for all of Canada in 2015 and the overall voter turnout of 66.1 percent presented in the figure.

[17] For more information on youth voting behaviour in Canada, including access and motivational barriers and different information needs, see the report of the 2015 National Youth Survey at elections.ca > Resource Centre > Research > Post-election Evaluations > 42nd General Election Evaluations.

Turnout on First Nations reserves

Voter turnout in 2015 for electors living on reserves was estimated at 62 percent, compared with 66 percent among the general population.[18] This represents an increase of 14 percentage points on reserve from 2011, compared with six percentage points for the general population. This participation gap is the smallest observed in recent history between turnout on First Nations reserves and the national turnout rate in federal elections.

Trend in Turnout on Reserves (2004–2015)
(excludes votes cast by special ballot)

——— On Reserves   – – Canada

Turnout (%)

| Year	On Reserves	Canada
2004	40.3	60.9
2006	48.8	64.7
2008	42.4	58.8
2011	47.4	60.2
2015	61.5	66.0

Election Year

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[18] Turnout calculations for 2015 and 2011 exclude votes cast by special ballot (618,802 votes in 2015 and 285,034 votes in 2011).

Reasons for not voting

Of those who reported not voting, most mentioned reasons that had to do with everyday life issues or political issues, according to the Survey of Electors. Reasons related to the electoral process arrived at a distant third. The distribution of reasons for not voting appears relatively stable over the past three elections.

Everyday life issues include being too busy, out of town, ill or limited by a disability. Political issues include not being interested in politics; not liking the candidates, parties, leaders or campaigns; or a lack of information about campaign issues. Electoral process issues include not being able to prove identity or address, transportation problems, a lack of information about when and where to vote, not being on the voters list or issues with the voter information card.

Reasons for Not Voting (2008–2015)

■ Everyday life issues ■ Political issues ■ Electoral process issues ■ Other

Election Year	Everyday life issues	Political issues	Electoral process issues	Other
2008	48	38	8	6
2011	52	37	7	4
2015	48	37	11	4

Reasons for not voting (%)
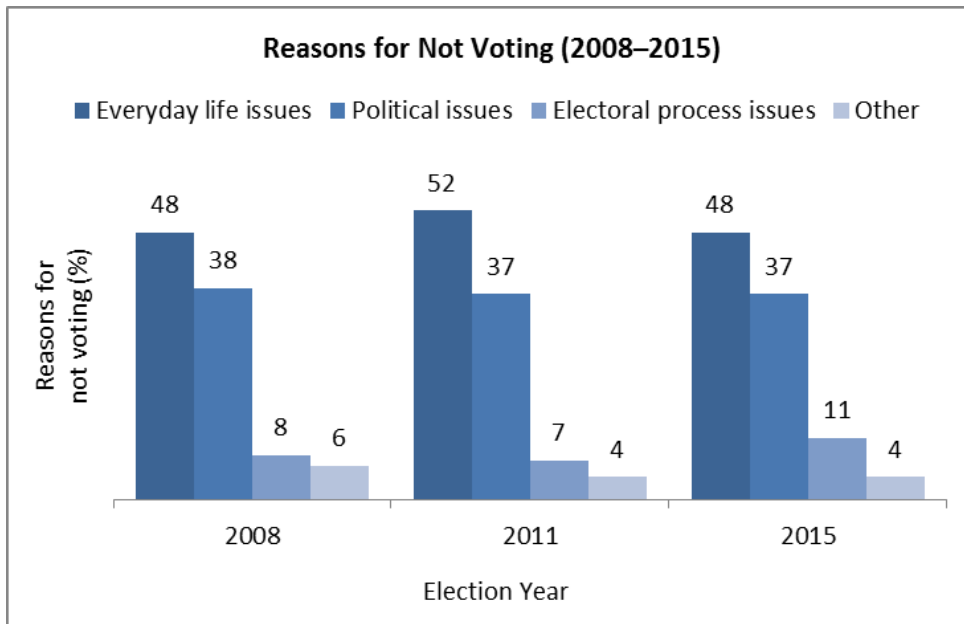
As in 2011, Elections Canada also included a few election-related questions in Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey following the 42nd general election. This was done to take advantage of the study's very large sample and its ample coverage across the country. One of the questions asked about the reasons for not voting. The results confirmed the general trend found in the Survey of Electors: everyday life issues came in at 48 percent, political issues at 40 percent and electoral process issues at 8 percent.

1.5. Conclusion and Next Steps

Overall, the vast majority of Canadians who used Elections Canada's services were satisfied. No systemic issues related to registration or voting were identified during the election or by the agency's post-election assessments. On the other hand, elector feedback indicates a clear need to automate and modernize the electoral process so it responds and adapts to shifts in service demands and local conditions. While the physical accessibility of polling locations was enhanced, the increasing presence of disability issues and concerns within the Canadian population indicate a need to further facilitate the participation of electors with disabilities.

In more specific terms, electors were aware of when, where and the ways to vote during the 42nd general election. Elections Canada was the primary and most trusted source of information on registration and voting. The agency's multimedia advertising campaign was effective in informing electors across all demographic groups, and the agency will maintain its multimedia communications approach going forward. It will refine its efforts to reach specific population groups more effectively, particularly students and new voters, who remain among the least knowledgeable about the voting process. In addition, it will improve its presence on social media, given its initial success in communicating with Canadians through these platforms.

Canadians aged 18 to 34 remain under-represented in the National Register of Electors compared with other age groups. Under the current legal framework, Elections Canada cannot obtain and store data on Canadian citizens before they turn 18 and become eligible to vote. This contributes to a persistent lag in young electors being included in the Register. Consequently, lower numbers of young people appear on the voters lists, and more young Canadians have to manually register at the polls. Elections Canada will request legislative changes to allow for the registration of youth as they approach voting age, which is a practice already adopted in other Canadian jurisdictions and around the world.[19]

Over a third of all registration updates during the election were completed online by electors themselves, confirming the popularity of digital self-service options. Elections Canada will make the online voter registration service universally available and more user-friendly for the next general election.

The vast majority of electors were able to vote without any difficulties. The agency remains concerned that some 172,700 electors were not able to meet identification requirements, especially with regard to proof of address. This is an impediment to their right to vote. Elections Canada remains of the opinion that adding the voter information card to the list of authorized pieces of identification, and allowing it to be used in combination with another authorized piece, is a way to reduce the proof-of-address barrier for some of these electors.

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[19] Currently, the collection and retention of information on Canadian citizens under the age of 18 for registration purposes is allowed in six Canadian jurisdictions: Alberta, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Quebec, Saskatchewan, Prince Edward Island and Yukon. Similar provisions also exist in nearly 20 states in the United States, the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland, Wales, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, Italy and France.

Elections Canada will continue working with the disability community to better understand disability trends within the Canadian population and identify service strategies that take these trends into consideration. It will test optical character recognition technology that can be used by electors with a visual impairment to verify their vote. It will keep working to improve the accessibility of local offices and polling places.

The rate of voter participation, particularly at advance polls, surpassed the agency's planning projections. Elections Canada will adapt its scenario planning to take better account of potential surges in turnout. As well, the agency will continue to improve its service to electors in the official language of their choice, in accordance with its commitments following the 2015 audit by the Commissioner of Official Languages.

Fundamentally, the 42nd general election confirmed that Canadians' voting behaviours are evolving in response to changing lifestyles, personal and family situations, and service preferences. Elections Canada's modernization strategy for the next general election is focused on enhancing the elector's registration and voting experience. It aims to make the electoral process simpler, more efficient and more flexible, while also making it easier for election officers to serve electors.

2. Political Entities' Experience

This section describes the key experiences of various political entities: candidates, their official agents and political parties. It presents specific observations about their experiences and outlines a path forward to improved services in the 43rd general election.

2.1. Candidates

Key Findings

- A total of 1,792 candidates ran in the 42nd general election, compared to 1,587 in 2011 and 1,601 in 2008.

- While four out of five candidates found it easy to comply with nomination requirements, some continued to indicate challenges in meeting them.

- Training sessions held before and after the election enhanced the ability of candidates and their agents to fulfill their legal responsibilities. Online training would help to increase participation in these sessions.

- Overall, the majority of candidates appreciated the services received from returning officers, local offices, the candidates' section of the Elections Canada website and the toll-free hotline.

Context

In the lead-up to the 42nd general election, Elections Canada focused on informing prospective candidates and their official agents about changes to the *Canada Elections Act*, especially about changes to their specific obligations under the Act. It sought to improve their ease of compliance by providing them with updated training and tools as well as ongoing support.

This section provides information on candidates' experiences with the nomination process and the appointment of official agents and auditors. It also reviews levels of satisfaction with support services and the statement of electors who voted.

Nomination process

In all, 80 percent of candidates found it easy to comply with the nomination requirements under the Act, which is consistent with 2011 (81 percent) and 2008 (79 percent). Of the 18 percent who had difficulties, the most common reasons were difficulty gathering the required signatures, and too much paperwork or bureaucracy. In 2015, fewer candidates (89 percent) were satisfied with their returning officer's timeliness in processing nominations, compared to 97 percent in 2011 and 96 percent in 2008.

The vast majority of candidates (90 percent) downloaded the nomination forms from Elections Canada's website rather than requesting printed versions from returning officers, according to internal monitoring. This is up from 78 percent in 2011.

Appointment of official agents and auditors

The majority of candidates (80 percent) did not have difficulties in finding an official agent, compared to 82 percent in 2011 and 77 percent in 2008. Of those who encountered difficulties, the most common reason, which is similar to previous elections, was trouble finding someone willing or available to take on the role. The next most common reason was trouble finding someone qualified for the work.

Likewise, the majority of candidates (86 percent) did not have difficulties in finding an auditor. Of those who encountered difficulties, the most common reason was trouble finding someone willing or available to take on the role (51 percent), followed by trouble finding someone qualified (39 percent). There is no comparative data from previous elections.

Support to candidates and official agents

Working toward a fixed election date made it easier for Elections Canada to offer just-in-time training for candidates' official agents. Two rounds of political financing training sessions were held in 11 cities across the country: "Getting Started" sessions were held in July and August, and "Closing the Campaign" sessions were held after the election. There were 574 registrations for the former sessions and 785 registrations for the latter.

Almost all participants (99 percent) were satisfied with the "Getting Started" sessions, and just as many (98 percent) were satisfied with the "Closing the Campaign" sessions. Virtually all who participated in a "Getting Started" session (99 percent) found that the session had met its objective. Furthermore, participants had significantly higher levels of confidence in their own ability to fulfill their tasks after the sessions.

During the election, 80 percent of candidates contacted Elections Canada through their local Elections Canada office, 64 percent used the candidates' section of the agency's website and 42 percent used the toll-free hotline for candidates.

The majority of candidates were satisfied with their interactions with Elections Canada. About 74 percent expressed satisfaction with the overall quality of service received. This was somewhat less than in 2011 (81 percent) and 2008 (79 percent).

At the local level, 84 percent of candidates were satisfied with their interactions with the returning officer, and 78 percent were satisfied with the way the returning officer ran the election. These figures are similar to the 41st and 40th general elections.

Distribution of the statement of electors who voted

Since 2008, poll workers have been tasked with filling out a statement of electors who voted at their polling station, which involves circling the voter's identifier number on a "bingo sheet." The poll workers make copies available to candidates' representatives at the end of each advance voting day as well as periodically during election day. At advance polling stations in 2015, once polls closed, Elections Canada allowed candidates' representatives to take a picture of the statements completed during the day on a portable device.

For the 42nd general election, the *Canada Elections Act* was amended to require that returning officers collect all original statements from all polling stations in the electoral district, photocopy them, and make a set of copies available to each candidate on request after the election.

Providing the statements to candidates, especially collecting and reproducing all originals after election day, was complex and time-consuming. Among candidates, 70 percent found the statements received during or after the election to be useful, according to the Survey of Candidates. After the election, two political parties reported not having received copies of all original statements for 122 and 132 electoral districts, respectively. Meanwhile, many returning officers indicated that no or few candidates actually asked for all the original statements. This means that, in many cases, copies were not requested but nonetheless had to be available.

Producing and distributing statements of electors involves many manual steps and is prone to administrative omissions. Elections Canada recognizes that the provision of statements was not optimal and is committed to exploring solutions for improvement. Enhanced returning officer training and better information for candidates and political parties could make the current system work better, but may not be enough to efficiently address the problems.

Ultimately, the system for providing information on electors who voted should be revisited. The introduction of electronic voters lists at the polls would create opportunities to record and share real-time voter information with political parties in a cheaper, greener and more efficient way.

2.2. Political Parties

Key Findings

- Political parties were generally satisfied with Elections Canada's services, and they confirmed many of the observations identified elsewhere in this report.

- Parties were highly satisfied with the process Elections Canada used to issue written opinions, guidelines and interpretation notes (OGIs).

- Some parties indicated that they did not receive all statements of electors who voted.

- Parties considered the service provided to them through Elections Canada's legal and general hotlines to be generally good and effective.

Context

Before and after the 42nd general election, Elections Canada asked the Advisory Committee of Political Parties for feedback on how it was preparing for and how it actually conducted the event, respectively. It also collaborated with political parties to implement the new legislative requirements for OGIs.

This section provides information on political parties' views about OGIs in particular, and about the conduct of the 42nd general election more broadly.

Written opinions, guidelines and interpretation notes

As a result of new legislative requirements introduced in 2014, Elections Canada began to issue OGIs on the application of the *Canada Elections Act* to political entities. This activity allowed the agency to address some of the more complex issues, such as those related to political financing, candidate and leader debates, election advertising on the Internet, the application of election advertising rules to telephone calls, and the use of member of Parliament resources during an election campaign. The process of issuing an OGI is both consultative and transparent. Drafts are sent to all registered parties and to the Commissioner of Canada Elections for comment. Elections Canada responds to these comments and considers them when it formulates the final version. The draft, all comments and responses, and the final OGI are published in an online registry.[20] The issuance of OGIs helps to make the administration of the *Canada Elections Act* consistent and predictable.

On June 9, 2015, the OGI Steering Committee (a part of the Advisory Committee of Political Parties) was convened to discuss and provide advice on the new OGI process. Elections Canada received positive comments on the organization of the OGI process in general. Members felt that it contributed to building bridges between Elections Canada and the parties, and to achieving a common understanding of respective viewpoints. They particularly appreciated the 30-day pre-consultation period.

Conduct of the election

Following the election, members of the Advisory Committee of Political Parties reconvened to share their experiences and comments.[21] Key highlights of their feedback on services to political entities included the following:

- There were inconsistencies in some electoral districts with respect to the nomination process and access rules for canvassers.

- Echoing feedback from candidates, some political parties indicated that they had not received all statements of electors who voted.

- Elections Canada's hotline assistance to political parties was considered to be generally good and effective.

- Some parties were concerned about stolen and vandalized campaign signs.

- In the field, canvassers were generally satisfied with their access to premises. However, some reported that their candidates had problems accessing public places, while others had problems accessing post-secondary institutions.

- There were some issues with accessing and using electronic voters lists.

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[20] View the registry of OGIs at elections.ca > Resource Centre > Opinions, Guidelines and Interpretation Notes.
[21] The full meeting summary is available at elections.ca > About Us > Advisory Groups > Advisory Committee of Political Parties.

Generally consistent with other feedback discussed in this report, the committee's observations on the election itself included the following highlights:

- Many advance polls had long lineups.

- Special ballot voting on campuses was a success.

- Changes to polling places created some confusion.

- Some voters had challenges meeting identification requirements.

- There is a need for better training of poll workers.

- Members were satisfied with returning officers' expertise and the services provided to electors.

2.3. Conclusion and Next Steps

The number of candidates running in general elections since 2008 continues to increase. As with recent elections, most candidates complied easily with nomination requirements during the 42nd general election and were able to recruit official agents and auditors. The majority of candidates continue to appreciate the services received from Elections Canada, and especially from the returning officer in their electoral district. For the next election, the agency will explore the possibility of creating an online candidates' portal to further improve services and offer new options, such as filing nomination papers online.

Training sessions for candidates' official agents were effective, and the upcoming transition to online formats promises to enhance participation. The moderate level of attendance points to the difficulty of delivering in-person training across a vast country. It was estimated that approximately 48 percent of the target audience lived within 60 km of one of the training sessions. To address this logistical challenge, Elections Canada will need to develop an online training program that complements or replaces the in-person sessions.

Both candidates and political parties confirmed many of the key points outlined in this report and provided additional details. They expressed satisfaction with how Elections Canada responded to the new requirement in the *Canada Elections Act* to issue OGIs, in particular with the 30-day pre-consultation period. Elections Canada will continue to improve the OGI process in collaboration with political entities prior to the 43rd general election.

Some political entities commented that, during the election, the statements of electors who voted were not always properly completed or available in a timely manner. The agency will review its procedures in this regard. In addition, Elections Canada will explore how to enhance the responsiveness of its general hotline for candidates and parties.

3. Integrity and Compliance

After the 41st general election of 2011, integrity concerns had been raised in relation to deceptive communications with electors and procedural errors by poll workers. These concerns prompted Elections Canada to launch an electoral integrity program that would strengthen its capacity in two areas: in detecting and responding to incidents that could interfere with the voting process, and in improving poll workers' compliance with procedures. The agency's new Electoral Integrity Office also coordinated communications with other bodies that are mandated to support electoral integrity, namely, the Office of the Commissioner of Canada Elections and the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission.

This section describes Elections Canada's efforts to monitor electoral integrity. It also provides a summary of the independent audit of poll worker performance, including Elections Canada's response to the findings.

3.1. Monitoring Integrity

Key Finding

- Though several issues attracted Elections Canada's attention during the 42nd general election, no incidents were detected that interfered with the integrity of the electoral process.

Context

Before and during the 42nd general election, Elections Canada informed electors and political entities of its preparations to detect illegal or deceptive campaign practices. Vigilance and reporting were major themes in messages to the public and to the Advisory Committee of Political Parties. In some cases, political parties and third parties echoed these messages by setting up incident reporting pages on their own websites.

This section discusses noteworthy issues that attracted the attention of the agency's Electoral Integrity Office during the 42nd general election.

Misinformation about when and where to vote

In light of the deceptive telephone calls that many electors received in the 41st general election, Elections Canada and Canadians in general paid special attention for signs of a similar occurrence in this election. It appears that the 42nd general election was free of large-scale, intentional deceptive communications. There were no complaints of electors being unable to vote because they received misinformation.

Some electors did complain that candidates or political parties distributed inaccurate information about when and where to vote. This mostly took the form of flyers delivered to electors' homes. Complaints were scattered across the country, and there was no indication of a targeted misinformation campaign. Elections Canada and returning officers worked with political entities to apply corrective measures. The agency also referred these cases to the Commissioner of Canada Elections for investigation.

Campaign sign vandalism

As in previous elections, there were a number of complaints about vandalism of campaign signs, some of which involved fires, slashing and obscenities. All of these complaints were referred to the Commissioner of Canada Elections for investigation.

Preventing double voting

The federal electoral system contains various safeguards to maintain the integrity of the vote, while ensuring that qualified voters have reasonable access to it. When they go to vote, all electors must prove their identity and address.

Controls are also in place to prevent double voting: returning officers use a national database to mark electors who cast their vote in advance, and this information appears on the lists used on election day. Occasionally, a poll worker may accidently cross the wrong name off a voters list, making it look like someone voted when they did not. Electors who are marked as having already voted need to go through additional controls to vote, such as taking an oath and signing a form declaring they have not previously voted.

Elections Canada conducts extensive post-election analyses, such as reviewing the records of votes cast at advance polls, applications to vote by special ballot, voter address changes and duplicate names on the National Register of Electors. It examines potential double voting on a case-by-case basis. Any cases requiring further investigation are referred to the Commissioner of Canada Elections.

3.2. Poll Worker Compliance with Voting Day Procedures

Key Findings of the Independent Audit of Poll Worker Performance

- The independent audit of poll worker performance concluded that training programs and their delivery were effective and that, overall, election officials properly performed their duties.

- The audit recommends both administrative and legislative changes to improve poll worker performance.

Context

Recent legislative changes require Elections Canada to arrange for an independent audit of poll workers' performance following each election. In planning for the audit, the agency consulted a number of stakeholders, including an auditor statistician, the Elections Canada Advisory Board, the Departmental Audit Committee, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, the Advisory Committee of Political Parties and an Audit External Panel established specifically for this initiative.

Following a competitive procurement process, in July 2015, the Chief Electoral Officer commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC) to conduct the audit and report on whether certain categories of poll workers performed the duties and functions imposed on them under specific sections of the *Canada Elections Act*. PwC was also tasked with determining the degree to which the established administrative controls, including manuals and training material, supported the poll workers in performing their duties. The sample included polling stations in each province and territory, and resulted in PwC auditing over 10,000 electoral interactions from coast to coast.

Summary of findings from the audit of poll worker performance

In summary, the audit report concluded that election officials[22] properly exercised their powers and properly performed their duties when processing the 90 percent of electors who showed up at the polls already registered and with documentary proof of identity and address. The audit reached the same conclusion regarding election officials' processing of the 10 percent of electors who required special procedures, such as those who registered on site or had to take an oath. However, for the latter group, it noted that some of the administrative procedures (e.g. record-keeping) were not performed consistently. The audit also concluded that training programs and their delivery were effective.

The report recommends some improvements going forward. A number of them are administrative in nature, while others require legislative changes. The report should be read in its entirety to understand PwC's conclusions and recommendations. It should not be relied on for any purpose other than the one for which it was intended.

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[22] The term "election officials" used in the audit report encompasses deputy returning officers, poll clerks and registration officers.

The following table summarizes PwC's recommendations and Elections Canada's response. The full report can be found in Appendix 2.

PwC's recommendation	Elections Canada's response
Modernize the electoral process including automation of components.	Elections Canada agrees with this recommendation. Work has already begun to identify elements of the electoral process at the polls that could benefit from automation. Elections Canada will carefully assess risks, benefits and costs, and will conduct tests before automating elements of the process at all polling stations in a general election. The agency will engage stakeholders as these initiatives evolve.
Explore opportunities for streamlining procedures at advance polls and for special procedures.	Elections Canada agrees with the findings and recommendation in this area. Work has already begun to review functions and procedures at the polls in order to simplify them. Elections Canada will be making recommendations to Parliament to modify the *Canada Elections Act* in line with this objective.
Consider enhancements to the existing training program to ensure that necessary focus/time is given to the administration of the special procedures and to ensure election officials understand why/how to complete the activities.	Elections Canada will be reviewing and updating its training to reflect any changes that result from automation and simplified procedures and functions at polling places. At the same time, the agency will take into account the specific recommendations made by PwC regarding training.

3.3. Conclusion and Next Steps

Following the 41st general election, Elections Canada exercised due diligence and strengthened its capacity to monitor electoral integrity. There were no incidents detected that interfered with the integrity of the 42nd general election. The vast majority of electors (92 percent) had a high level of trust in the accuracy of the election results, compared with 87 percent in 2011. The level of trust increased most notably among Aboriginal electors, from 66 percent in 2011 to 83 percent in 2015. The agency will maintain its capacity to detect, respond to and refer to the appropriate authorities those issues that can adversely affect the integrity of an election.

The independent audit of poll worker performance provided third party confirmation that, overall, election officials properly performed their duties. Elections Canada welcomes the recommendations of the independent audit. These recommendations are consistent with the agency's observations and will be integrated into its modernization agenda.

4. Electoral Operations

This section provides behind-the-scenes perspectives on notable electoral administration activities. It looks at the challenges of administering one of Canada's largest civic exercises and summarizes what Elections Canada heard from election workers, returning officers and field liaison officers.

4.1. Challenges of a 78-Day Election Calendar

Key Findings

- The establishment of a fixed election date for 2015 did not provide as much predictability as anticipated for administering the election, given that the start date was not established in advance.

- While Elections Canada demonstrated agility and responsiveness after the election was called, there were some delays in deploying field operations, especially because of the need to renegotiate office leases and recruit election workers for an extended election period.

Context

Under Canada's parliamentary system, general elections are scheduled to take place on fixed dates but can still be called in advance. Election campaigns can also extend beyond the minimum 36-day period set out in the *Canada Elections Act*, with no maximum duration. The 42nd general election calendar was 78 days, making it the longest in 140 years.

Opening local offices

With the election date fixed for October 19, 2015, Elections Canada had selected September 1 as the date to begin deploying its field operations. Based on a 36-day election calendar, this would have provided a two-week head start for returning officers across the country to finalize temporary office leases, make arrangements for telephone and computer services, order election materials and begin to hire local office staff. This launch date was also used to plan the delivery date for support services, such as the start-up of call centres.

Elections Canada is informed about the start of general elections at the same time as all Canadians. When the election was called on August 2, 2015, the agency had to review its planning and immediately deploy its field operations. Returning officers had to renegotiate the start date of many leases, while 107 returning officers had to find a new office location. Returning officers also stepped up measures to engage local office staff earlier and for a longer period, and revised all planned deliveries of equipment and election supplies.

In the 42nd general election, 320 of the 338 returning offices (about 95 percent) were open and operational within eight days. The last returning office was opened and fully operational on August 18, which was 15 days after the election call; and the last satellite office was opened on August 19, which was 16 days after the election call. In the 41st general election, all local Elections Canada offices were considered operational within three days of the election call.

Some delays were experienced with specific support services. There is no doubt that, for the first few days of the campaign, some electors and political entities did not get the level of service they had been accustomed to in previous elections. The duration of the election period will be further discussed in the forthcoming recommendations report to Parliament.

The increased availability of online services may have minimized the impact of delays in office openings for electors. They were able to obtain information from the agency website, register online or apply electronically to vote by mail. For the 43rd general election, the agency will explore providing similar services to candidates.

4.2. Election Workers

Key Findings

- Some 285,000 election workers were hired across the country in 2015, compared with 229,000 in 2011 and 194,000 in 2008.

  - The significant increase in workers required to deliver the election in the field indicates a need to seriously consider alternative operational models that can sustain and enhance the consistency and quality of services in the future.

  - The process by which political parties may recommend election workers delays returning officers' recruitment efforts and only manages to fill a portion of the available positions.

- Overall, election workers felt that they were well trained and prepared to assume their tasks. They were satisfied with the materials and tools provided; however, some experienced difficulties with the functionality of these tools.

- Most election officers were satisfied with the operation of their polling place, including voter identification and the voting process. Some experienced challenges with revision procedures.

- While election officers qualified their working conditions as good, there are areas for improvement. They include better training, less paperwork, more work breaks, more staff, as well as better and more spacious facilities and locations.
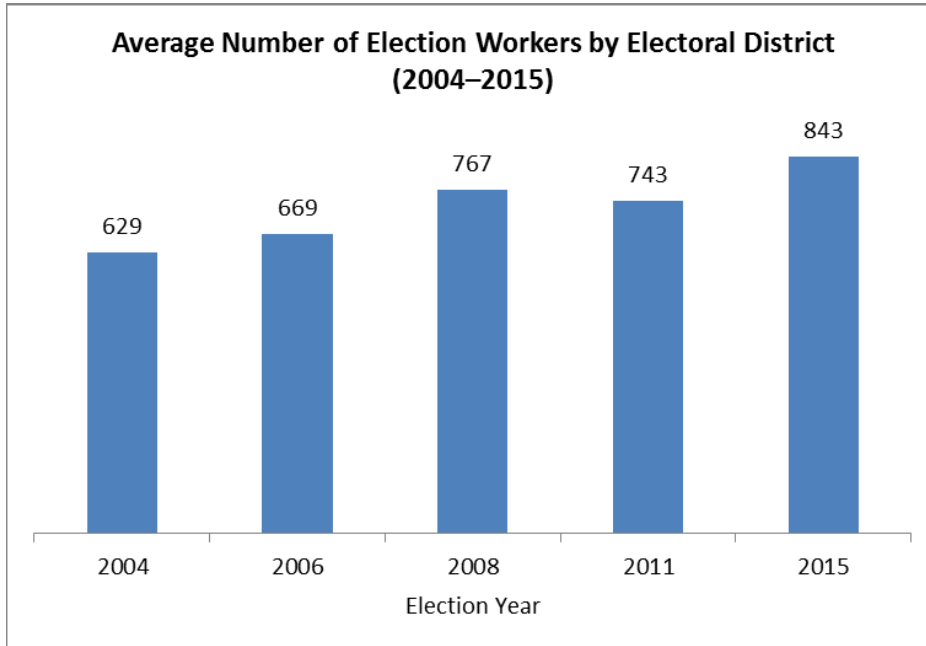
Context

During a general election, returning officers in each of Canada's 338 electoral districts hire and appoint election workers—Canadians with limited training and often no prior electoral work experience—to administer the prescribed voting procedures at some 70,000 polling stations.

Elections Canada compiles data on staffing for each election. It also commissioned a survey of election officers to obtain feedback on their experience of the election. This section provides a summary of the findings for recruitment and proceedings at the polls.

Recruitment

Some 285,000 people were hired to fill election worker positions in the 42nd general election, resulting in an average of 843 workers per electoral district. Returning officers hired around 55,000 more election workers in 2015 than in 2011, as shown in the graph below. This increase is mainly due to the additional personnel required to provide adequate services at the polls, maintain compliance with voting day procedures and meet accessibility requirements. The addition of 30 new electoral districts to accommodate the growth of the electoral population was also a contributing factor.

Average Number of Election Workers by Electoral District (2004–2015)

Year	Average Number of Election Workers
2004	629
2006	669
2008	767
2011	743
2015	843

To fill these positions, returning officers must first turn to names provided by the registered political parties of the candidates who finished first and second in the electoral district in the last general election. However, this has become a decreasing source of potential workers, as the number of names submitted has declined over the past few elections. The proportion of poll workers recommended by candidates fell from 42 percent in 2006 to 33 percent in 2008, to 30 percent in 2011 and to some 20 percent in 2015.[23] Also, candidates provided such references in only 49 percent of electoral districts in 2015.

Recruitment has become more and more challenging. It is increasingly difficult to find enough people willing to accept the positions. Elections Canada took a number of measures to help returning officers in their recruitment efforts.

For the second time in a general election, any interested Canadian could fill out an online application to work at the polls. A total of 243,934 online applications were submitted to returning officers, compared to 130,427 in 2011.

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[23] Based on a sample of electoral districts.

To further ease recruitment, the Chief Electoral Officer authorized returning officers to hire 16- and 17-year-olds. It was suggested that they engage schools and school boards late in the spring, well in advance of the election. The results were very encouraging. In some cases, this work experience formed part of students' curricula.

Returning officers also recruited poll workers through targeted digital ads posted on employment-related websites; through job posters displayed in libraries, community centres and shopping malls; and by reaching out to community groups and local organizations to promote employment on voting days.

Finally, to supplement these efforts, Elections Canada enlisted the help of its regional media advisors across the country to conduct recruitment drives in some 60 electoral districts.

Training and support

Elections Canada's renewed training program included three-hour in-person training sessions for most workers across the country, and new online modules for select central poll supervisors and select election officers in remote areas.

Almost all election officers (96 percent) felt well prepared to undertake their tasks, according to the Survey of Election Officers. This is a significant increase from 89 percent in 2011. Almost all (97 percent) also felt prepared to apply the voter identification requirements. Likewise, 92 percent felt that they were well prepared to provide services to electors with disabilities.

The majority of election officers (84 percent) were satisfied with the training sessions, consistent with 83 percent in 2011 and 86 percent in 2008. Of those who were not satisfied with the training, suggestions for improvement included better or better quality training (41 percent), more time for training (23 percent), more detailed information (20 percent), more knowledgeable trainers (19 percent) and more hands-on training (17 percent).

The vast majority of election officers (95 percent) found their main guidebook useful. Most (89 percent) were satisfied with the election materials that were provided to them, compared to 90 percent in 2011 and 89 percent in 2008. Some 85 percent said the various forms that were provided to them were easy to complete.

Working conditions at the polls

Various media reported that poll workers experienced difficult working conditions. These conditions result in part from rules in the *Canada Elections Act*. For example, a deputy returning officer or poll clerk cannot be replaced by other election workers while the polls are open, which may limit breaks during busy periods. In some cases, especially where there were lineups or high turnout, workers faced 14- to 16-hour days. Difficult working conditions have been a source of concern for the Chief Electoral Officer, and he has raised the issue previously in reports to Parliament.

Nevertheless, almost all election officers (94 percent) found that their working conditions were good. Of the 5 percent who claimed working conditions were not good, the most common reasons were the lack of breaks (29 percent), inadequacy of the work place (22 percent), long working hours (22 percent) and the complexity of handling unique cases (17 percent).

A majority (87 percent) reported that the building where they worked was suitable for holding an election, compared to 89 percent in 2011 and 86 percent in 2008. Among those who did not find their building suitable, the top reasons were a lack of room (36 percent), inadequate heating (29 percent), and a lack of accessibility for people with disabilities (18 percent).

Prior to the 42nd general election, the tariff of fees for election workers was updated to provide higher wages. About four in five election officers (81 percent) were satisfied with their hourly rate of pay, compared to 78 percent in 2011 and 81 percent in 2008. Likewise, 86 percent were satisfied with the time it took to receive their pay cheque, which is a marked decrease when compared to 96 percent in 2011 and 2008. While still meeting its four-week service standard, Elections Canada required more time to pay poll workers in 2015 than in previous general elections. The exceptional duration of the event (78 days) and the growth in the number of poll workers increased the volume and complexity of pay transactions. The agency has already initiated a project to improve its performance in the next general election.

When asked about the first thing they would change to make their work easier at the polls, 74 percent of election officers proposed ideas. The top five suggestions were better training (17 percent), less paperwork (8 percent), having breaks (6 percent), more staff or help (5 percent), and a better or more spacious facility or location (5 percent).

Voter registration and the voting process

Most election officers (90 percent) were satisfied with the way the election went at their polling place, compared to 93 percent in 2011 and 89 percent in 2008. Overall, 93 percent reported that the flow of electors went smoothly, compared with 95 percent in 2011 and 94 percent in 2008. It can be noted, however, that this proportion was higher among those who worked on election day only (95 percent), and lower among those who worked at both advance polls and on election day (89 percent).

The vast majority of election officers (97 percent) indicated that voter identification proceeded well. This is similar to the 2011 and 2008 levels. Where problems did occur, the most common were electors showing up at the polling station without the proper identification, and electors thinking they could use their voter information card as a piece of identification to register or vote.

Most registration officers (86 percent) found it easy to register electors at the polls.

4.3. Voting Service Interruptions on First Nations Reserves

Key Findings

- Five out of 14 polling places experienced a voting service interruption on election day due to ballot shortages, resulting in 13 electors, all at one polling place, being unable to vote.

- These service disruptions, however regrettable, were isolated cases. Elections Canada sincerely regrets that these electors could not exercise their franchise.

- Elections Canada will work toward mitigating the factors that make planning voting operations on First Nations reserves challenging.

During the 42nd general election, there were reports of voting service interruptions due to ballot shortages in a number of polling places on First Nations reserves. Despite immediate instructions from the Chief Electoral Officer to have ballots reallocated from neighbouring polling places or photocopied, there were reports of voters leaving their polling place without being able to vote.

In the weeks following the election, Elections Canada conducted an administrative review into these incidents, assembling facts from media reports as well as gathering eye-witness testimonies from returning officers, polling place supervisors, representatives of the Assembly of First Nations and local representatives of candidates' campaigns.

The review found that 14 polling places in nine electoral districts ran low on ballots on election day. In nine of these polling places, voting was not interrupted, as election officers were able to replenish the ballot supply before it was completely exhausted, either by reallocating ballots from another polling place or from the returning office. In some cases, they used photocopied ballots, as per instructions from the Chief Electoral Officer. In three First Nations communities,[24] the issue was resolved within 10 to 12 minutes, while in One Arrow (Saskatchewan), service was interrupted for up to 30 minutes. Nevertheless, there were no eye-witness accounts of electors leaving the polling place without voting in these locations.

In an isolated incident, one polling place in Lake St. Martin (Manitoba) ran out of ballots before the close of polls. Election officers were uncomfortable with using photocopied ballots and refused to offer them to voters. As a result, 13 electors were unable to vote. Elections Canada sincerely regrets that these electors could not exercise their franchise.

The administrative review identified some contributing factors to the ballot shortages and service delays. These factors are relatively common in remote communities of large rural electoral districts, where many First Nations reserves are located. For example, voter registration drives in remote communities are more difficult to conduct and less effective. As well, Elections Canada's online voter registration service was unable to handle the non-standard address types found on many First Nations reserves. The result was low registration rates during the revision period and, given the sharp turnout increases, much higher registration rates on election day.

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[24] These were the First Nations communities of Siksika (Alberta), Fort Hope (Ontario) and Moose Factory (Ontario).

With turnout on First Nations reserves now approaching that of the general population, this is an important consideration, particularly because registrations during the revision period are used to forecast the volume of ballots needed at a polling station. If advance registration is low, the actual number of ballots required in a community may be underestimated. Returning officers will take this into account to improve their planning for the next general election.

4.4. Feedback from the Field

Key Findings

- Field administrators had a number of wide-ranging recommendations for improving the conduct of elections at the local level.

- Elections Canada needs to continue engaging returning officers and field liaison officers as it reviews and responds to their concerns and suggestions.

Context

In January and February 2016, officials from Elections Canada held regional meetings with returning officers and field liaison officers to gather their feedback about field operations in the 42nd general election. With over 300 participants, 27 days spent in the regions and 70 returning officer workbooks available for review, Elections Canada officials were able to gain a genuine understanding of returning officers' experiences and their ideas about improving field operations. This section provides an overview of some of the feedback received.

Summary of the regional meetings

The main recommendations from returning and field liaison officers who participated in post-election regional meetings focused on improving the working relationship between Elections Canada and the field. They suggested enhancing Elections Canada's support by assigning more experienced personnel to interact with them. They also emphasized the importance of simplifying and better coordinating communications and information flows between the agency and the field.

A number of suggestions were made to improve and streamline services for electors. These included rethinking the current polling division model to enable more flexibility for electors to vote where they want, especially during advance polls. Other suggestions included simplifying the advance voting process and holding election day on a weekend, when more people are available to work and vote. To make poll worker recruitment easier, participants suggested beginning recruitment before the election call.

Returning officers expressed a need for enhanced technology both in their offices and at the polls. Their vision of modern election services includes the automation of poll procedures and the availability of live voters lists at the polls to speed up the administration of the election. They also indicated a need to further automate and integrate some processes, such as recruitment and pay for election workers, and to streamline other processes.

With regard to the competency of election officers, returning officers recommended simplified, more hands-on and practical training as well as simplified election materials to help improve compliance with procedures. They also mentioned that the legal framework within which election officers operate is very complex and cumbersome, and should be streamlined.

Finally, returning officers saw potential benefits in re-examining advance polling districts and polling divisions after an election, and called for a reduction in the number of electors per advance poll.

4.5. Conclusion and Next Steps

The establishment of a fixed election date did not fully produce the hoped-for predictability for administering the 42nd general election. The absence of a fixed start date, or a specified time range within which to conduct the election, resulted in significant deployment challenges and delays. These delays, in turn, inconvenienced some electors and political entities. Elections Canada will make recommendations in its upcoming report to better define the duration of an election period.

In 2015, returning officers hired around 55,000 more poll workers than in 2011. While the addition of 30 new electoral districts accounted for part of this increase, the significant expansion of the workforce was mainly to provide adequate services at the polls, maintain compliance with procedures and meet accessibility requirements. Continuing to rely primarily on increased staffing to improve and ensure the quality of voting services is not sustainable. There is a pressing need to streamline and automate services at the polls, as well as to explore more efficient ways of allocating human resources at polling places. As part of its voting services modernization efforts, Elections Canada will work to revamp services at the polls for the 43rd general election. It will also make recommendations to Parliament on this subject in its upcoming report.

To recruit poll workers, returning officers must first turn to the names provided by political parties. Over the years, these references have become a diminishing source of potential workers. Effective election services in the field require that returning officers recruit, hire and train a sufficient number of qualified workers in a timely manner. Elections Canada will make recommendations in its upcoming report to Parliament to ensure that returning officers are equipped with the staff that they need, when they need them.

As part of its modernization efforts, Elections Canada will undertake a multi-tier approach to improving the poll worker recruitment process. This will include legislative recommendations to alleviate unnecessary burdens or eliminate outdated milestones for recruitment, enabling returning officers to recruit workers through streamlined and automated processes and to target young workers through early outreach efforts.

With respect to voting operations on First Nations reserves, where ballot supply issues affected a few communities, Elections Canada will work toward mitigating the factors that make planning voting operations in large rural electoral districts more challenging. First, the agency will work to improve voter registration services and to increase the currency of the voters lists on First Nations reserves. This will start with a re-examination of how the online voter registration service handles electors' addresses, with a view to enlarging the scope and variety of its address standards. Second, additional information and training programs are warranted for returning officers and election workers

who provide election services in remote communities, given the specific challenges in those regions. It is also important to reach out and work with the community in preparing to conduct the election.

As part of its modernization efforts, Elections Canada will continue to work with returning officers to improve the management of field operations. It will strengthen the communications, coordination and support functions between the field and headquarters. It will continue to provide online training that is practical, hands-on and targeted at providing election workers with the knowledge and skills that they need to perform their specific tasks.

While almost all election officers found that their working conditions were good, Elections Canada believes there is room and a need for improvement. There is a fundamental imbalance between the growing job demands on election workers and the challenging conditions in which they are met. The integrity of the electoral process depends on the ability to attract, motivate and retain large numbers of appropriately skilled Canadians. They must be willing to accept election work and perform assigned duties diligently, for one day or a few days. Elections Canada will seek to provide a greater opportunity for breaks, allow workers to be replaced for short periods of time, and establish a rotation of workers to better respond to lineups and delays. Elections Canada will make recommendations to Parliament on these issues in its upcoming report.

Conclusion

Overall, the 42nd general election was run very successfully. This conclusion is supported by multiple lines of evidence, including survey results, administrative reviews, the first independent audit of poll worker performance, focus groups held with field administrators across the country, direct feedback from electors and various stakeholders, and the election assessment report of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.[25]

The success of this event, however, does not diminish the fact that there are lessons to be learned and areas for improvement. The 42nd general election confirmed that Canadians' voting habits are shifting in fundamental ways. Canadians expect service options that align with their lifestyles, personal and family situations, geographic settings, and health circumstances. Simply stated, electors increasingly want to vote when and where it suits them—no longer just on election day at a designated polling station. They want information that is easily accessible, useful and provided through information channels they use in their daily lives. They want to communicate seamlessly with Elections Canada and receive real-time responses to their questions and concerns. Most importantly, Canadians want convenient, accessible and modern election services.

Given this shift and the number of years between elections, it is essential to recognize that the success of the 42nd general election is no guarantee of favourable outcomes in the future. This is not the time for complacency. In Elections Canada's estimation, federal electoral administration has reached a tipping point and action is required now. The transformation in elector behaviours and service preferences is significant, and a new baseline must be set in terms of meeting, and hopefully exceeding, electors' service needs.

Since the end of the 42nd general election, Elections Canada has been busy designing and beginning to implement a modernization agenda aimed at improving Canadians' voting experience at the next federal general election in 2019. This agenda will streamline voting operations, automate various elements of the voting process, provide additional online self-service options, and increase and enhance service offerings to electors who choose to vote by mail. It will also focus on improving support services for specific groups of electors, as well as candidates.

Elections Canada's modernization agenda recognizes that service improvements can no longer depend, as they have in the past, on increasing the number of election workers at polling locations to ensure consistent and timely service. The agency must take greater advantage of technology if it is to align modern electoral management with Canadians' evolving service expectations.

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[25] See the election assessment mission's final report at www.osce.org/odihr/elections/canada/166641.

To fully move ahead with these changes, Elections Canada will require additional flexibility under the *Canada Elections Act*. In the coming weeks, the Chief Electoral Officer will submit a report to Parliament recommending legislative changes that will enable modernization while maintaining the integrity of the electoral process.

Finally, Elections Canada will adapt its modernization program to support any electoral reform that may be undertaken by Parliament. The agency's initiatives are designed to be compatible with, and to complement, other changes to Canada's electoral system that may be introduced as a result of the parliamentary process.

Appendix 1: Overview of the Public Opinion Research Studies

This report draws on data from several surveys that are outlined below. While surveys are highly valuable research and feedback tools, they are also subject to inherent limitations, among which are the following:[26]

- **Self-selection bias.** It is increasingly difficult to get people to respond to surveys, and those who do take the time to respond may have different profiles than those who do not. They may simply be more interested in the subject, and thus contribute to skew the findings with certain types of behaviours or attitudinal characteristics.

- **Social desirability bias.** Respondents can, consciously or not, give the answer that they think the surveyor wants to hear or that they think will put them in the best light. Voting, for example, is a behaviour that is typically over-reported in surveys.

- **Memory effect.** Post-election surveys sometimes take place days, if not a few weeks, after an election. This may affect the quality of the respondents' answers and amount of details they are able to remember.

- **Small groups and low prevalence.** Surveys are very useful and relatively accurate for identifying mainstream trends from large samples. However, estimating patterns within smaller subsets of the population or low-prevalence behaviours is much less accurate. For example, an observation based on a sample of 2,500 respondents yields a typical ±1.96 percentage-point margin of error. The same observation based on a sample of only 25 respondents would yield a ±19.6 percentage-point margin of error.

Survey of Electors

Elections Canada commissioned R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. to conduct a survey of electors to measure their experiences, attitudes and opinions regarding various aspects of the 42nd general election. The firm completed 3,516 telephone interviews between late October 2015 and mid-January 2016. The response rate was 19.5 percent, and the margin of error was ±1.8 percentage points, 19 times out of 20 at the national level. The research design also included over-sampling of youth aged 18 to 24, Aboriginal people, immigrants and electors with disabilities to ensure sufficient representation among these groups of interest.

Cost: $160,338

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[26] For example, see W. Lawrence Neuman, *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1997).

Survey of Candidates

Elections Canada commissioned EKOS Research Associates Inc. to survey the 1,792 candidates to assess their experiences and measure various attitudes, such as their satisfaction with the administration of the 42nd general election. A total of 916 candidates completed the survey, for a response rate of 54 percent (based on the 1,635 candidates with valid contact information). Since the firm attempted to obtain participation from all candidates, just like for a census, there is no applicable margin of error.

Cost: $53,044

Survey of Election Officers (Poll Workers)

Elections Canada commissioned Forum Research Inc. to conduct a survey of election officers to gather their impressions on the overall administration of the vote. The survey firm conducted telephone interviews with 3,503 election officers randomly selected from a list of 201,602 officers. The sample was stratified to ensure representation from deputy returning officers, central poll supervisors, information officers, poll clerks and registration officers as well as to ensure good coverage of ordinary polling stations on election day, advance polls, mobile polls, senior residence or long-term care polls, Aboriginal reserve polls and student campus polls. The overall response rate was 51 percent, and the margin of error was ±1.7 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Cost: $58,407

Labour Force Survey (Statistics Canada)

For the second time since 2011, Elections Canada collaborated with Statistics Canada to include questions on voter participation in the Labour Force Survey following a general election. The Labour Force Survey is administered by Statistics Canada on a monthly basis to collect labour market information for approximately 100,000 individuals based on a sample of approximately 56,000 households.[27] Participation in the survey is mandatory, but answering Elections Canada's questions in the November 2015 survey was voluntary. The response rate to Elections Canada's filter question on citizenship was 96.7 percent. The fact that almost all survey participants volunteered to answer Elections Canada's questions significantly reduces the selection bias usually observed in traditional political or electoral surveys. Compared to other surveys—where the sample size is usually between 1,500 and 3,500 respondents—the Labour Force Survey, with its very large sample, allows for more meaningful statistical analysis, particularly for studying smaller subsets or more marginal aspects of a subject.

Cost: $185,000

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[27] In each dwelling, information about all household members is usually obtained from one household member.

Electoral Reminder Program Evaluation

Elections Canada commissioned Nielsen Consumer Insights to conduct a series of surveys and focus groups with electors to assess the reach and effectiveness of its Electoral Reminder Program. The firm conducted a total of 6,005 online surveys (using a proprietary online panel) in five phases, as each phase of the Electoral Reminder Program was rolled out. Nielsen also held 17 in-person and online qualitative focus groups in five cities across the country (Halifax, Montréal, Mississauga, Winnipeg and Vancouver). The research design included representation from electors among the general population and from target groups of interest, including youth aged 18 to 24, students, ethnocultural groups, Aboriginal electors and electors with disabilities. The evaluation report is based on the online surveys and focus groups; therefore, no margin of error can be calculated.

Cost: $271,647

Appendix 2: Audit of Poll Worker Performance

Elections Canada
Independent audit report on the performance of the duties and functions of election officials – 42nd General Election

February 16, 2016

Submitted to Mr. Marc Mayrand, Chief Electoral Officer of Canada

Submitted by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, Ottawa

pwc

Contents

Executive summary

In response to section 164.1 of the *Canada Elections Act*, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) was engaged to perform an independent, statutory audit and report on whether deputy returning officers (DRO), poll clerks (PC) and registration officers (REGO) have, on all days of advance polling and on polling day, properly exercised the powers conferred on them, and properly performed the duties and functions imposed on them, under sections 143 to 149, 161 to 162 and 169 (hereinafter referred to as "the relevant sections") of the *Canada Elections Act* (CEA or "the Act").

In addition to other roles required to prepare for and support advance polling and election day, each returning officer (RO) is responsible for appointing a DRO, a PC and a REGO (collectively referred to as "election officials") to perform election related duties at a polling site. One DRO and one PC is required per polling station and typically, one REGO is assigned to each central polling site/place. It is the duties of these specific election officials that are included in the scope of this audit under S.164.1 of the Act.

The scope of the duties of election officials as prescribed in the relevant sections of the Act require election officials to register electors, request and examine each elector's proof of identity and address as well as administer and complete prescribed forms and certificates on all days of advance polling (held October 9–12, 2015) and on election day (held on October 19, 2015).

Any Canadian citizen who is at least 18 years of age as of election day may vote in the electoral district (ED) in which they reside. The CEA provides procedural safeguards designed to protect the integrity of the electoral process, one of which requires electors to prove eligibility (identity and residency) before receiving a ballot. For most electors who are already registered at their current address and therefore included on the List of Electors, election day procedures involve a simple, efficient check of one or more pieces of acceptable ID to confirm identity and address of residence. Based on our testing results, approximately 90% of electors voted in this manner. The remaining 10% of electors tested required special administrative procedures prior to being issued a ballot.

Election officials must administer special procedures for all electors whose residence is going to be attested to, who are not on the List of Electors, whose name has been previously crossed off the List of Electors in error or who require minor corrections to their information. Depending on the circumstances, special procedures include initiating the appropriate certificate, administering a verbal or written oath/declaration to the elector and administering a verbal warning/written oath to an elector and their attestor.

It is our understanding Elections Canada (EC) has introduced quality control procedures and enhanced the training materials since the previous general election (2011). We are also aware EC is challenged when recruiting optimally qualified temporary resources across all of the EDs in the short window of time before an election. We took these considerations into account when developing our audit strategy.

Our audit did not validate election results, assess whether election officials other than DROs, PCs and REGOs performed their specific legislative duties, assess performance of legislative duties that are not specifically referred to in S.164.1 of the Act nor did it assess the administrative controls of EC beyond those implemented for purposes of supporting election officials in the conduct of their duties under S.164.1 of the Act.

Our audit findings and conclusions are presented at an aggregate level. Our results are not attributed to any specific ED, polling site, polling station or election official. Our major findings and other observations are described below. Our recommendations are included in Appendix A to this report.

We performed our audit in accordance with the Canadian Standards on Assurance Engagements 3001: *Direct Engagements* (CSAE 3001).

Audit criteria

For this audit, the principal criteria and therefore our audit mandate are specifically prescribed in the relevant sections of the Act described above. For the purpose of this audit, we needed to decide, given the operating environment of EC, what would represent a significant deviation in the exercise of powers and the performance of the duties and functions of election officials. Working with EC officials as well as their External Audit Panel, we agreed on two levels of controls and procedures as well as reporting thresholds. Key controls and procedures are those performed by election officials which establish a person's qualification and entitlement to vote. Secondary controls are those which support/reinforce the elector's established qualification/entitlement to vote and are typically more record-keeping in nature.

The establishment of thresholds for reporting purposes was critical during the planning of the audit. The reporting thresholds were agreed with management and the External Audit Panel and reflected the relative importance of the control. For key controls, a deviation of 5% or more was considered a major finding. For those same key controls, a deviation of 2%–4.9% was considered as other observations. For secondary controls, a deviation of 11% or more was considered as other observations.

These thresholds were established in the context of the Supreme Court of Canada Judgement (*Opitz v. Wrzesnewskyj*, 2012 SCC 55) which noted inter alia that "Given the complexity of administering a federal election, the tens of thousands of election workers involved, many of whom have no on-the-job experience, and the short timeframe for hiring and training them, it is inevitable that administrative mistakes will be made".

Approach

In order to provide reasonable assurance as to whether election officials performed their duties and functions as prescribed by the CEA, we selected a sample of EDs from across Canada and gathered sufficient and appropriate evidence to conclude on the audit objective. Evidence gathering techniques comprised of direct observation, enquiries and inspection of election documents (representing the certificates, forms, reports and other paperwork required to serve an elector and document the results).

In order to assess whether DROs, PCs and REGOs properly performed the duties imposed on them under the relevant sections of the Act, we determined that it was necessary to perform audit procedures on site at polling stations on all days of advance polls and on election day (October 19, 2015), as well as election documents returned to EC's warehouse facility following the electoral event. Our sample included polling stations in each Canadian province and territory and resulted in PwC auditing over 10,000 electoral interactions.

We evaluated the design and implementation of specific administrative controls – specifically the training of election officials and associated guidebooks/other materials. This included an in-depth review of the content of the training programs, attendance at a sample of training sessions and interviews with ROs, recruitment officers and training officers. During advance polls, as well as on election day, we posed a series of questions to election officials to obtain their perspective on their training experience and supporting materials.

Summary of findings

We concluded that:

1. On all days of advance polling and on election day, election officials properly exercised the powers conferred on them, and properly performed the duties and functions imposed on them under the relevant sections of the Act with respect to regular electors (representing approximately 90% of electors). We did not note any major findings relating to deviations in key controls and procedures with respect to regular voters.

2. On all days of advance polling and on election day, election officials properly exercised the powers conferred on them and properly performed the duties and functions imposed on them under the relevant sections of the Act with respect to electors subject to special procedures (approximately 10% of electors). We noted only one major

finding from a deviation related to key controls relating to special procedures. We noted that some of the administrative procedures were not performed consistently but these deficiencies were record-keeping in nature.

3. The content of the training programs and the delivery of these programs was effective. Election officials reported that the guidebooks and other aids were useful (provided they had time to refer to them) in performing their responsibilities and troubleshooting when they were unsure of how to proceed. We identified opportunities to focus more time during training on the administration of the special procedures and the associated documentation as some election officials did not feel fully equipped to deal with these scenarios after completing their in-class training program.

EC asked us to report any other relevant observations that we captured during the course of our work that might assist them to improve or enhance their processes. In this context, we identified a number of additional observations, which we have reported to EC. The two most significant observations are set out below. These observations were not directly related to the scope of our audit and as a result, did not impact our overall conclusion.

- The current approach to serve electors is a manual process. For regular electors, this requires the PC to search through dozens of pages of the List of Electors to find the elector's name and then once their identification and residency is validated, using a ruler, crossing the elector's name off and record that they have voted. For electors requiring the administration of special procedures, the manual nature of the process includes initiating and completing certificates or other forms, including in many cases, the signature of the elector and in all cases, the signature of the DRO and a corresponding entry in the poll book. Manual processes inherently lead to human error. This is intensified when election officials not fully comfortable with the different voting scenarios and associated paperwork are faced with the pressure of long line-ups and dissatisfied electors. We believe that there is an opportunity to streamline this process.

- The record of votes cast, a unique form required during advance polls, requires the PC to document the elector's full name and full address and then the elector is asked to sign the document as well. When the elector has voted, the PC confirms this by marking the elector off as "voted" on the form. The record of votes cast requires the signature of the elector confirming they have voted as part of an advance poll in case challenges arise later on should that elector attempt to vote on election day. As a result of the increased and unanticipated voter turnout at advance polls and the additional manual paperwork required to serve each elector, significant delays and line-ups were experienced at polling stations across the country. This led to frustration and dissatisfaction from electors. Meanwhile, PCs faced their own challenges in terms of keeping up with the number of electors in line and focusing on serving in the best interest of the elector. Again, we believe there is an opportunity to streamline this process.

Summary of recommendations

Three primary recommendations are being proposed for consideration by the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO). It should be noted that some of the recommendations, if implemented, could eliminate the need for others. In some cases, implementation may require legislative changes. It is suggested that each recommendation be fully evaluated and if a decision is made to proceed, each one should be tested fully before full implementation. The proposed recommendations as well as EC's responses are summarized as follows (full recommendations are presented in Appendix A to this report).

1. Modernize the electoral process, including automation of components.

2. Explore opportunities for streamlining procedures at advance polls and for special procedures.

3. Consider enhancements to the existing training program to ensure that necessary focus/time is given to the administration of the special procedures and to ensure election officials understand why/how to complete the activities.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), commonly known as Elections Canada (EC), is an independent, non-partisan agency that reports directly to Parliament. The CEO, an agent of Parliament, is responsible for directing and supervising the conduct of elections and referendums at the national level and monitoring compliance under the *Canada Elections Act* (CEA or "the Act").

On June 19, 2014, Bill C-23 received Royal Assent. C-23 amended the Act by adding section 164.1 to introduce a legislated audit. Section 164.1 of the Act states the following.

For each general election and by-election, the Chief Electoral Officer shall engage an auditor that he or she considers to have technical or specialized knowledge — other than a member of his or her staff or an election officer — to perform an audit and report on whether deputy returning officers, poll clerks and registration officers have, on all days of advance polling and on polling day, properly exercised the powers conferred on them, and properly performed the duties and functions imposed on them, under sections 143 to 149, 161 to 162 and 169.

PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC) was engaged to perform an independent audit and report on the performance of the duties and functions of election officials in relation to sections 143 to 149, 161 to 162 and 169 of the Act (hereinafter referred to as "the relevant sections of the Act"), including our assessment on the degree to which administrative controls established by EC support election officials in this regard for the 42nd General Election. The relevant sections of the Act pertain to an elector's proof of identity and residence, attestation to an elector's qualification or residence, registration of electors who are not on the List of Electors and record-keeping duties.

The scope of the duties of election officials as prescribed in the relevant sections of the Act require election officials to register electors, request and examine each elector's proof of identity and address as well as administer and complete prescribed forms and certificates on all days of advance polling (held October 9–12, 2015) and on election day (held on October 19, 2015).

1.2 EC's operating context

The statutory mandate of EC is highly operational. The writ for the 42nd General Election was issued on August 2, 2015. Once the writ was issued, EC and an appointed returning officer (RO) in each of the 338 electoral districts (ED) started mobilizing hundreds of thousands of temporary workers to prepare for the election. The ROs have a very small window of time to hire and train these temporary workers before election day. In addition to other roles required to prepare for and support advance polling and election day, each RO is responsible for appointing a deputy returning officer (DRO), a poll clerk (PC) and a registration officer (REGO) (collectively referred to as "election officials") to perform election related duties at a polling site. One DRO and one PC is required per polling station and, typically, one REGO is assigned to each central polling site/place. It is the duties of these specific election officials that are included in the scope of this audit under S.164.1 of the CEA.

The delivery of the election is highly dependent on the ROs' ability to hire and train a temporary workforce of approximately 285,000. These individuals are the ones who, for advance polls and election day polls, confirm appropriateness of identification provided by the elector, confirm that the individual is at the appropriate polling station and is on the List of Electors, confirm that the individual has not previously voted, strike the individual off the List of Electors, provide the elector with a ballot and confirm that they voted. In special circumstances, the election officials initiate and complete additional steps and associated paperwork to allow electors to vote. With a total of 338 EDs, over 15,500 polling sites and over 67,000 polling stations across Canada, EC has implemented measures to support election officials by providing them with training, tools and guidance to perform their duties

and functions. It is our understanding that following the 41st General Election, EC took actions to improve processes and tools, focusing on compliance, and implemented a quality control framework to test these changes in a controlled environment.

Election officials are required to work long days, with minimal breaks, serving electors. In addition, the requirements of the Act result in complexities relative to the procedures they are expected to undertake (i.e. number of different acceptable forms of identification, number and nature of special procedures) throughout the day. In the 42nd General Election, advance polls were open for eight hours a day for four days in a row, and election day polls were open for 12 hours to allow the maximum number of people to vote. The recent election saw an increase in voter turnout. Voter attendance at advance polls increased from 2.0 million to 3.6 million electors[1] from the previous election and overall voter participation increased from 13 million to 17 million[2].

The current administrative processes required to be completed by the election officials are currently very manual – with only printouts, checklists and booklets available to document the results of the interactions with electors. Human error is unavoidable due to the manual nature of the processes to serve electors and the approximately 285,000 election officials[3] required to administer the associated procedures.

1.3 Special procedures applied for advance polls / election day

Any Canadian citizen who is at least 18 years of age as of election day may vote in the ED in which they reside. The CEA provides procedural safeguards designed to protect the integrity of the electoral process, one of which requires electors to prove eligibility (identity and residency) before receiving a ballot. For most electors who are already registered at their current address and therefore included on the List of Electors, election day procedures involve a simple, efficient check of one or more pieces of acceptable ID to confirm identity and address of residence. As per our testing results, approximately 90% of electors voted in this manner. The remaining 10% of electors tested required special administrative procedures (see table in Section 4.1 for full list subject to audit) prior to being issued a ballot. The typical special procedures administered are outlined below.

Registration certificate
A registration certificate is initiated when an elector has not been previously registered on the List of Electors. This typically can happen if an individual has become eligible to vote or has moved into a different ED or polling division since the last election. This certificate enables the individual to vote in the appropriate polling division and requires the elector to sign a written declaration confirming they are a qualified elector and have not previously requested a ballot in the current electoral event.

Correction certificate
A correction certificate has two purposes. If the information on the List of Electors is noted to have minor errors as compared to the name/address of the elector's official identification, this certificate is used to note the correction so that the List of Electors can be updated for the next election. In this case, a verbal oath is administered to the elector before providing the elector their ballot. The other use of the correction certificate is when the List of Electors already shows that the individual elector has already been crossed off the List of Electors. In this case, the correction certificate is used to document that the elector should not have been previously crossed off the List of Electors. Similar to the registration certificate, the elector is required to sign a written oath confirming that they have not previously requested a ballot in the current electoral event.

Oath of residence certificate
In cases where an individual does not have valid proof of residency, an individual who resides in the same polling division can attest to that elector's residence. Both the elector and attestor must sign written oaths and a verbal

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[1] As provided by Elections Canada.
[2] *Idem.*
[3] *Idem.*

warning is read to both parties notifying them of the consequences of falsifying information. An attestor can only attest for one individual and must not have been attested for in the current electoral event.

1.4 Roles and responsibilities of election officials

For an elector who is on the List of Electors and has the appropriate identification, together, the DRO and PC at the polling station are responsible for obtaining and reviewing the elector's identification and establishing that an elector is qualified to vote by performing a series of prescribed (by the CEA) duties prior to providing a ballot and documenting that they have voted.

Election officials must administer special procedures for all electors whose residence is going to be attested to, who are not on the List of Electors, whose name has been previously crossed off the List of Electors in error or who require minor corrections to their information. Depending on the circumstances, special procedures include completing the appropriate certificate, administering a verbal or written oath/declaration to the elector and administering a verbal warning/written oath to an elector and their attestor.

Once the DRO is satisfied that the elector is considered qualified to vote, they are issued a ballot. During the process of serving an elector at the registration desk and at the polling station, the CEA prescribes certain duties that must be performed including record-keeping tasks.

Deputy returning officer
The DRO is responsible for opening their polling station, authorizing and signing pre-filled certificates, verifying acceptable identification, administering oaths and warnings to electors, issuing ballots, counting the ballots and returning materials to the returning office.

Poll clerk
The PC supports the DRO with the primary responsibility of documenting the voting process which includes crossing an elector's name off the List of Electors, assisting in completing certificates if there is no REGO, marking the elector as voted, completing the statement of electors who voted (Bingo Sheet) and recording applicable proceedings in the poll book, as required.

Registration officer
An elector who is not on the List of Electors is required to register with the REGO (or PC if there is no REGO assigned to the polling site). If not on the List of Electors, the REGO is responsible for checking the poll key to determine if the elector is at the correct polling site and pre-filling a registration, correction or oath of residence certificate.

Central poll supervisor
Although not included in the scope of the audit as outlined in the relevant sections of the Act, the central poll supervisor plays a key role at both advance and election day polls. The central poll supervisor swears in candidates' representatives, liaises with the RO, ensures accessibility, oversees the polling site activities, troubleshoots and supports the election officials as they serve electors. The central poll supervisor is also expected to perform some quality assurance procedures to ensure the completeness and accuracy of the documentation produced by the election officials.

2 Focus of the audit

2.1 Objective and scope

The objective of the audit, as set out in our contract with EC, was to report on:

- whether DROs, PCs and REGOs have, for the 42nd Canadian General Election, on all days of advance polling and on polling day, properly exercised the powers conferred on them, and properly performed the duties and functions imposed on them, under the relevant sections of the Act

- the degree to which the administrative controls established by EC, including manuals and training material, support election officials in the exercise of their powers and performance of their duties and functions in accordance with section 164.1 of the Act

Collectively, these objectives represent the subject matter for our audit. The CEO is the official who is responsible for the subject matter.

We performed our audit in accordance with the Canadian Standards on Assurance Engagements 3001: *Direct Engagements* (CSAE 3001).

2.1.1 Limitations

We did not:

- assess election results

- assess whether election officials other than DROs, PCs and REGOs performed their specific legislative duties

- assess performance of legislative duties that are not specifically referred to in S.164.1 of the CEA

- assess the administrative controls of EC beyond those implemented for purposes of supporting election officials in the conduct of their duties under S.164.1 of the CEA

Our audit process is discussed in some detail below; however, it is important to recognize that there are certain inherent limitations of the auditing process. For example, audits are generally based on the concept of selective testing of the data being examined and are, therefore, subject to the limitation that material errors, material or significant weaknesses in internal controls, or fraud or other illegal acts having a direct and material impact on the subject matter, if they exist, may not be detected, simply because they did not occur in the transactions we observed or at the polling stations that we attended. In addition, because of the characteristics of fraud, particularly those involving concealment through collusion and falsified documentation (including forgery), an audit may not detect a material fraud.

2.2 Auditor's responsibility

Our responsibility is to provide reasonable assurance[4] that there were no significant deviations in the exercise of powers and performance of the duties and functions of election officials from the requirements set out in the subject matter described above.

2.3 Management's responsibility

EC is responsible for establishing and maintaining administrative controls (key and secondary) to ensure election officials have the training, tools and guidance necessary to allow them to carry out their duties and functions in accordance with the Act.

2.4 Criteria

CSAE 3001 also requires us to describe in our report the criteria that we used to come to our conclusion. The criteria are the benchmarks we use to measure or evaluate the underlying subject matter. We identify the criteria before we start our work. These requirements are reflected in our audit criteria as outlined in Appendix B to this report.

For this audit, the principal criteria and therefore our audit mandate are specifically prescribed in the relevant sections of the Act described above. For the purpose of this audit, we needed to decide what would represent a significant deviation in the exercise of powers and the performance of the duties and functions of election officials. Working with EC officials as well as their Audit External Panel, we agreed on two levels of controls and procedures as well as acceptable tolerance levels. Key controls and procedures are those performed by election officials which establish a person's qualification and entitlement to vote. Secondary controls are those which support/reinforce the elector's established qualification/entitlement to vote and are typically more record-keeping in nature.

The establishment of thresholds for reporting purposes was critical during the planning of the audit. The reporting thresholds were agreed with management and the External Audit Panel and reflected the relative importance of the control. For key controls, a deviation of 5% or more was considered a major finding. For those same key controls, a deviation of 2%–4.9% was considered as other observations. For secondary controls, a deviation of 11% or more was considered as other observations.

These thresholds were established in the context of the Supreme Court of Canada Judgement (*Opitz v. Wrzesnewskyj*, 2012 SCC 55) which noted inter alia that "Given the complexity of administering a federal election, the tens of thousands of election workers involved, many of whom have no on-the-job experience, and the short timeframe for hiring and training them, it is inevitable that administrative mistakes will be made".

CSAE 3001 requires us to describe the quality control standards for our audit and whether we complied with relevant independence and ethical standards of our profession.

- In conducting our audit, we applied the Canadian Standards on Quality Control 1 issued by the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada. This standard requires that our work be adequately planned and conducted while adhering to performance, reporting and quality control standards throughout the duration of the audit.

- To the best of our knowledge, throughout the engagement, we complied with all relevant independence and ethical requirements.

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[4] CSAE 3001 defines reasonable assurance as follows: Reasonable Assurance Engagement – An assurance engagement in which the practitioner reduces engagement risk to an acceptably low level in the circumstances of the engagement as the basis for the practitioner's conclusion. The practitioner's conclusion is expressed in a form that conveys the practitioner's opinion on the outcome of the measurement or evaluation of the underlying subject matter against criteria. A reasonable assurance engagement may be referred to as an audit engagement.

3 Our approach

In order to provide reasonable assurance as to whether election officials performed their duties and functions as prescribed by the CEA, we selected a demographically and geographically representative sample from across Canada and gathered sufficient and appropriate evidence to conclude on the audit objective. Evidence gathering techniques were comprised of direct observation, enquiries and inspection of election documents (representing the certificates, forms, reports and other paperwork required to serve an elector and document the results).

3.1 Approach to sample selection of EDs and polling stations

Our sample of EDs was designed to reflect the diversity of the Canadian voting population. In selecting our sample we considered characteristics of the voting population including age, urban and rural population density, income, ethnic origin and aboriginal identity based on the most recent Statistic Canada Census Program data (2011). Our sample included EDs in each Canadian province and territory.

We conducted audit procedures, designed to test how election officials carried out specified duties, on site at random polling stations within the selected EDs on each day of advance polls and on election day. Our testing procedures included observation of the duties of the election officials throughout the day of advance polls and election day. We also reviewed a sample of documents from the polling stations that we visited that were returned to the EC warehouse following the election. We tested how election officials performed their duties with respect to over 10,000 electoral transactions (votes). There are certain inherent limitations to our audit approach, including:

- The presence of our auditors at polling stations observing performance of election officials as they carried out their duties had the potential to affect the way in which they carried out their duties.

- We based our sample on 2011 Census data which, while the most current and best information available, is not necessarily representative of current demographics and may not reflect the demographics of the population of election officials.

With the exception of advising EC in advance of the polling stations selected for on-site testing, all of these factors were discussed with and disclosed to EC.

Accordingly, our sampling and testing approach was designed specifically to support our overall audit mandate as specified by legislation at an aggregate level. We did not attempt to draw any conclusions with respect to the performance of officials serving individual EDs or individual geographic regions or demographic subgroups within Canada.

3.2 Assessment of election officials' compliance with legislative duties

In order to assess whether DROs, PCs and REGOs properly performed the duties imposed on them under the relevant sections of the Act, we determined that it was necessary to perform audit procedures on site at polling stations on all days of advance polls and on October 19, 2015, as well as election documents returned to EC's storage facility following the electoral event.

We performed the following procedures at advance and general election day polls.

1. Observed the duties performed by the REGO at a sample of polling sites for a sample of electors served at the registration desk to verify that duties performed met the requirements of the CEA. More specifically, that the following duties were performed.

    1.1.   Confirmed the polling station of the elector.

    1.2.   Checked whether the elector was included on the List of Electors.

    1.3.   Administered the required forms and certificates, as required by the specific situation.

2.   Observed the duties performed by DROs and PCs for a sample of electors served at a sample of polling stations during various intervals when the polls were open. More specifically, that the following duties were performed.

    2.1.   Obtained acceptable ID from each elector for proof of name and address[5].

    2.2.   Validated the elector's information by comparing it to the List of Electors to determine whether the elector was registered.

    2.3.   Administered special procedures as prescribed by the CEA.

    2.4.   Completed forms and certificates, as applicable.

    2.5.   Administered correct oaths, verbal or written, and verbal warnings when applicable.

    2.6.   Recorded proceedings in poll book, as required.

    2.7.   Performed the following duties for all electors.

- Crossed elector off the List of Electors (for electors who were registered).
- Marked the elector as "voted" immediately after the ballot was placed in the ballot box.
- Completed the statement of the electors who voted on polling day (for distribution to candidate representatives) (for electors who were registered).

3.   Examined election documents at EC's warehouse to verify that relevant forms were appropriately administered by election officials given the elector's circumstances and that proceedings were accurately recorded.

Our procedures were limited to observation without interacting or interfering with election officials as they were serving electors and administering their paperwork.

During advance polls, as well as on election day, we posed a series of questions to election officials to obtain their perspective on their training experience and supporting materials. We discuss our procedures in relation to our assessment of EC's approach to training and support of election officials in the section that follows.

3.3 Assessment of EC's approach to training and support of election officials

We performed the following procedures to assess EC's approach to training and supporting election officials to prepare them for their roles in relation to the 42nd General Election.

- Interviewed representatives within EC to understand the overall design of the training program for election officials.

- Reviewed guides, manuals, memos, videos and instructions ("training material") provided to election officials in relation to their duties on advance polling and on polling days to assess whether the information provided is complete, sufficient and appropriate for the effective discharge of their responsibilities.

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[5] As defined by Elections Canada using the "Have your ID ready" list.

- Conducted interviews with ROs, training officers and recruitment officers to understand the design of the training program and the delivery of the training curriculum to participants.

- Conducted interviews with training officers to obtain an understanding of their perspective on the effectiveness of the support, tools and guidance that is provided to election officials.

- Observed the delivery of training to election officials at selected training sessions.

- Conducted interviews with training participants at the conclusion of the training session.

- Conducted enquiries with election officials during periods of voter inactivity at polls.

4 Findings – Major and other

Our audit findings and conclusions are presented on an aggregate level. Our results are not attributed to any specific ED, polling site, polling station or election official. Our key findings and other observations are described below. Our recommendations are included in Appendix A to this report.

4.1 Performance of the duties and functions of election officials

A Canadian citizen who is at least 18 years of age on election day may vote in the ED in which they reside. The CEA provides procedural safeguards designed to protect the integrity of the electoral process, one of which requires electors to prove eligibility (identity and residence) before receiving a ballot. For most electors who are already registered at their current address and therefore included on the List of Electors, election day procedures involve a simple, efficient check of one or more pieces of acceptable identification to confirm identity and address of residence. Based on the sample tested, approximately 90% of electors voted in this manner in the 42nd General Election. The remaining 10% of electors required special administrative procedures prior to being issued a ballot and exercising their right to vote.

The following table outlines circumstances that require special procedures as well as the approximate percentage of electors (making up the 10% referred to above). Note PwC did not observe execution of any transfer certificates in our testing.

Special circumstances	Percentage of electors (Approximate)
An elector is not on the List of Electors for their polling division (registration certificate).	6.0%
An elector requires a minor correction to their electoral information on the List of Electors (correction certificate).	2.0%
An elector is previously crossed off as voted on the List of Electors (correction certificate).	0.5%
An elector does not have identification with their address; requires an attestor to provide proof of the elector's residence (oath of residence certificate).	1.0%
An elector's qualification or residence is challenged (oath of qualification).	0.5%
An elector is voting by transfer certificate (transfer certificate).	N/A
Total	**10.0%**

4.2 Major findings

4.2.1 No major findings resulting from deviations in key controls and procedures for regular electors.

Our testing did not identify any major findings from deviations in key controls and procedures for regular electors (i.e. the approximately 90% of electors). In addition, we only noted the one following major finding from a deviation related to a key control for special procedures (i.e. where those electors requiring special procedures make up approximately 10% of electors). Details of this finding are outlined in the section below.

4.2.2 Oaths/declarations are not always administered or signatures obtained for electors requiring special procedures.

Depending on the circumstances, special procedures may include administering a verbal oath to the elector, administering an oral warning to an elector and their attestor, and/or administering written oaths/declarations to the elector and/or attestor. These procedures are intended to reinforce the integrity of the electoral process by ensuring that ballots are only issued once to eligible electors.

In several of the special procedures that are administered, specifically the registration certificate, the correction certificate (in the case where the elector's name is already crossed off the List of Electors in error) and the oath of residence, a written oath/declaration is required to be read and signed by the elector/attestor in acknowledgement. The following outlines the nature of the oath/declaration required under each of the primary special circumstances.

- Registration certificate – Declaration by elector that they are qualified to vote (i.e. a Canadian citizen and 18 years of age or older by election day) and that they have not requested a ballot for the electoral event.

- Correction certificate (elector's name was crossed off the List of Electors in error) – Written oath that the elector has not requested a ballot for the electoral event.

- Correction certificate (minor correction required on the List of Electors) – Verbal oath that they are qualified to vote and have not previously requested a ballot for the electoral event.

- Oath of residence certificate (elector) – Written oath that the elector resides in the electoral district has been orally advised of qualifications of an elector.

- Oath of residence certificate (attestor) – Written oath that the attestor knows the elector personally, the elector resides in the address noted on the certificate, the elector resides in the same polling division, they have not attested to the residence of another elector during the electoral event and that their own residence has not been attested for in the electoral event.

During the observation of the administration of these oaths/declarations by the DRO, our audit noted circumstances beyond our reporting threshold where the DRO did not request the signature of the elector on the applicable certificate. As a result, the certificate did not include evidence that the elector had read and signed the applicable oath/declaration. We also noted circumstances where the DRO did not read aloud the oral warning to the elector and attestor when an oath of residence certificate was administered. In addition to our observation at advance polls and ordinary polls, we also examined election documents at EC's warehouse facility. Many of the certificates examined did not provide evidence that the applicable oath/declaration was administered (i.e. elector/attestor signatures in place for written oaths/declarations and appropriate notations for confirmation of verbal oaths administered).

If the DRO does not obtain the elector's signature or does not indicate the elector's affirmation on the applicable certificate, there is no evidence that the elector has confirmed they are qualified to vote, have not requested a ballot in the electoral event or that they reside in the electoral district. In the case of an attestor, without evidence of the administration of the written oath through the attestor's signature, there is no confirmation that they meet the criteria to attest for the elector.

4.3 Other observations

The following represent observations noted from the audit that were record-keeping in nature (secondary controls).

4.3.1 When initiating registration certificates, it was not evident how REGOs verified the elector's place of residence to ensure they were directed to the correct polling station.

An elector whose name is not on the List of Electors for their polling division may register in person at advance polls or at general election day polls. In the case where the elector needs to be registered, the REGO has to be satisfied that the address of the elector is within the appropriate polling division. REGOs are expected to obtain the elector's address and, where necessary, compare it to the poll key to confirm that the elector's residence is within the ED and a polling division being served by that polling site. The poll key is a list of addresses and corresponding polling stations within an ED.

For electors served at the registration desk, we identified instances above our reporting threshold for a secondary control when the REGO did not review the poll key to confirm that the elector's address fell within the polling divisions served by that polling site. We appreciate that an elector's address could have been familiar to the REGO and, therefore, no further verification was considered necessary. However, given recent changes to boundaries across and within EDs, if the poll key is not consulted, there is a risk that an elector could vote at the wrong polling division or potentially in the wrong ED.

4.3.2 In an effort to serve the elector and minimize wait time, PCs did not consistently mark electors as having voted as soon as their ballot was cast, as prescribed by the Act.

Separate controls are in place to confirm that the elector has only been issued one ballot for that electoral event (i.e. striking off the List of Electors by the DRO) and that the ballot has been returned and placed in the ballot box (checking off the elector as voted on the associated documentation by the PC).

Section 162 of the CEA stipulates that the PC must indicate that the elector has voted. This allows for effective reconciliation of the ballots. This is typically evidenced by a check mark in the box next to the name of the elector on the List of Electors or the record of votes cast at advance polls. If an elector is not on the List of Electors, the PC is required to tick the elector as having voted in the poll book (or on the record of votes cast at advance polls). The CEA prescribes that this duty must be performed as soon as the elector's ballot has been deposited in the ballot box. This duty is in addition to having to cross off the elector's name when the elector appears on the List of Electors.

Our audit identified instances, above our reporting threshold for a secondary control, where the PC did not mark the elector as voted as soon as the elector's ballot was deposited in the ballot box. In some cases, the PC marked the elector as having voted at the time they presented the required ID but prior to the elector being issued a ballot; while in other circumstances, the PC checked off the elector as voted after the elector had left the polling site. In some cases, this activity was completed in batches, specifically at advance polls. Further to our examination of election documents at EC's warehouse facility, we noted that in most cases, electors were eventually checked off as voted.

If electors are marked off as voted prior to ballots being issued or well after an elector has left the polling site, the lack of real time monitoring results in the inability to confirm whether the elector did in fact cast their ballot. This may also cause difficulties for election officials when they reconcile the number of electors who voted to the number of ballots.

4.3.3 Overall, election officials were challenged when conducting special procedures due to lack of familiarity of when and how to complete the various forms and the low volume of special electors at any one polling station. As a result, certificates, forms and checklists for special procedures were not always correctly or completely documented.

Certificates

As noted above, the administration of special procedures requires the initiation of a certificate based on the nature of the situation. The sections of the individual certificates require information pertinent to the situation but typically require the name and address of the elector and any other relevant information, the information related to the oath/declaration to be administered, a signature of the elector and attestor, as applicable, and the signature and date by the DRO. Detailed testing results identified situations, above our reporting threshold for secondary controls, where the wrong certificate was used for the special procedure being faced, e.g. correction certificates used for registrations. Further, testing results confirmed a number of certificates were either incomplete or completed inaccurately as compared to the information required (i.e. both sections 2 and 3 of the correction certificate were completed; fields of the registration certificate not completed).

Poll book

When special procedures are administered at ordinary polls, the duties of the PC include having to record the proceedings in the appropriate section of the poll book. The poll book should have an entry for each elector that required special procedures and the information in the poll book must agree to the information on the corresponding certificate. Our audit noted examples above our reporting threshold where the poll book was not completed accurately and completely for the administration of the special procedures observed. Inaccurate or incomplete entries in the poll book do not provide visibility of the details of the interaction with the elector and the special procedures administered. As a result of our examination of election documents at EC's warehouse facility, we noted instances where a certificate did not have always have a corresponding entry in the poll book.

4.4 Assessment of administrative controls established by EC

As outlined in our approach section, the assessment of the administrative controls was based on results of our detailed review of the training program materials and guidebooks, observation of the delivery of selected training sessions and interviews, and enquiries with EC staff and election officials, including DROs, PCs, REGOs, training officers and recruitment officers.

Overall, feedback was positive on the content of the training programs and the format of how the training was delivered. Further, election officials found the availability of the guidebooks and other aids very useful in assuming their responsibilities and troubleshooting when they were unsure of how to proceed. Feedback was, further, very positive on the role of the central poll supervisor in consistently providing ongoing support and conducting quality checks periodically to avoid delays later in the day when needing to reconcile records and ballots. Opportunities were identified, however, to focus more time on the administration of the special procedures and the associated documentation as election officials did not feel fully equipped to deal with these scenarios after completing their in-class training program. The following represent our findings related to the design and implementation of the training program and associated tools.

4.4.1 Opportunities were noted to enhance the training program to better equip election officials to perform their duties.

In order to equip the approximately 285,000 temporary workforce hired to successfully administer the voting process during the general election, a formal training program is in place and delivered to each election official in advance of taking on their responsibilities. This is no small task; once the writ is dropped, the RO has the task of

finding people who are qualified and available for the election period to fill key support functions – including the recruitment officer and training officers in supporting them in seeking out/screening potential candidates, training, assessing and swearing them in, and supporting them in the completion of their assigned functions during the advance polls and ordinary polls.

Depending on the size of the ED, a RO/recruitment officer needs to find a workforce of approximately 770[6] individuals to work at advance and ordinary polls, which includes a redundancy factor to allow flexibility for those who drop out in advance or do not show on the day of voting.

4.4.1.1   Format of the training program

The content and format for the training program was redesigned for the 42nd General Election, focusing on learning techniques appropriate for adult learners, which included the support of videos to demonstrate scenarios that could be faced at the polling site and to supplement the information being delivered by the training officer. In addition, the training program materials were designed to ensure consistency in training delivery: a standard slide deck to be used by training officers with mandatory speaking notes in the delivery of the training, a training guide for training officers and pre-established exercises for participants to complete.

The training program for the 42nd General Election was designed so that there was a tailored training curriculum depending on the intended role at the polls and whether the duties would be performed at advance or ordinary polls. The various in-class training courses delivered within each ED by the training officer(s) included:

- DRO/PC (3-hour mandatory in-class training session)

- REGO/information officer (3-hour mandatory in-class training session)

- Central poll supervisor (expectation to attend each of the DRO/PC and REGO/information officer in-class training sessions and an additional 3-hour mandatory in-class training session specifically for the central poll supervisor, totalling 9 hours of mandatory training)

In order to ensure that all election officials are provided the training required (based on their expected role), training officers within each ED typically deliver approximately 33[7] in-person training courses in the weeks leading up to the advance and ordinary poll days. A 3-hour course with limited to no breaks was provided to get through all the materials required to equip the election officials with sufficient knowledge to assume their assigned duties. As per the design of the training program, training officers used a combination of visual aids (videos and posters), slide decks, the guidebooks and the actual templates/tools used at the polls to instruct participants.

Although it is widely accepted that the most effective delivery of training is in-person, inherent challenges exist with the delivery of in-class training to a temporary workforce, across a vast geography, in two official languages and in a very short time period.

Results of interviews with a sample of training officers from the 42nd General Election confirmed the challenge with delivering a significant amount of technical information in a limited timeframe. EC has determined that training may not exceed 3 hours due to practical constraints around trainee availability. A 3-hour course with limited to no breaks was necessary to get through all the materials required to equip the election officials with an understanding of how to perform their duties; however, specifically in the case of the DRO/PC training sessions, even this amount of time was insufficient, as not all topics were able to be covered in sufficient detail and many individuals were tired/weary by the end of the training course, impacting participants' ability to absorb all the material being presented.

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[6] As per Elections Canada.
[7] As per Elections Canada.

Without sufficient preparation in advance of the poll days, election officials were often uncomfortable with their duties at the outset of their assigned poll days and could not "hit the ground running" in an efficient and effective manner relative to the administration of special procedures.

It should be noted that the completion of practice scenarios was the only opportunity for the training officer to observe participants working through the examples and to try to identify any participant who might not be qualified to take on the duties and responsibilities of an election official and should not proceed to the next step (i.e. swearing in and confirmation of responsibilities for advance or ordinary poll days). Due to the amount of guidance that participants needed during the completion of the practice scenarios from the training officer, in some scenarios, limited opportunity was available to the training officer to assess the competence of the participants.

4.4.1.2   Training curriculum

The training curriculum generally followed a consistent flow for each of the intended audiences, and covered the following topics.

- Background to the electoral process
- Introduction to the different roles at the polling site
- Overview of the core values at the polling site
- Introduction to reference guide and advance preparation for election day
- Specifics of the roles/responsibilities of the election official (depending on the audience)
- Practice scenarios
- Recap, review of location of resources online, course evaluation
- Oaths

The first few topics were general to all election officials and provided the necessary background material assuming limited exposure to the electoral process. The topics covered in these areas relied on videos to deliver key messages. The information provided allowed all participants to have a baseline understanding of the electoral process and expectations for polling days. This coverage of these background topics used up approximately 60[8] minutes of the 180 minutes of the individual training courses. Because this background material was covered consistently for all training audiences, the central poll supervisors were exposed to the same material three times as they were expected to attend training for all audiences to ensure they understood the responsibilities and activities of the other election officials.

Beyond the background topics, the remainder of the training courses focused on the specific duties and functions of the individual audiences.

DRO/PC training

The details of the roles/responsibilities of the DRO/PC included several key components such as: introduction to acceptable forms of identification for electors to prove their names and residence; serving electors and the potential special procedures that will be required; and counting/reconciling ballots. Based on the feedback from the majority of DROs and PCs interviewed and consistent with the results of the audit observations outlined above, the most complex component of the responsibilities at the polling station is the completion of the certificates, poll book and the administration of the oaths/declarations.

Given the amount of background content that had to be included in the in-class training, although the voting scenarios, the certificates, the poll book and the associated oaths/declarations were covered, limited time was able to be spent in-class to sufficiently cover the different scenarios. Topics requiring coverage included the details of each certificate (including the fact that the correction certificate was actually used for two different purposes and as a result, only certain sections of the form would be applicable depending on the scenario), the corresponding entry in the poll book and the administration of the associated verbal or written oath/declaration.

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[8] As per Elections Canada.

In addition, while practice scenarios/examples were included in the course materials, limited time was available to allow participants to work through all the different scenarios in sufficient time and then allowing a group take-up, recap of the scenarios to allow individuals to ask questions and confirm their understanding. The practice examples were the last step of the training course material and it was challenging for participants to successfully work through the examples given the timeframe to complete the exercises and the amount of material they had been exposed to in the previous three hours.

Under pressure of long line-ups at the polling station, frustrated electors and long days, DROs and PCs often did not feel well-equipped to quickly and efficiently identify which circumstances required which certificate, to easily navigate through the completion of a certificate, to complete the associated entry in the poll book and the administration of the oaths/declarations. Ultimately, this led to the observed results of incomplete/inaccurate certificates and entries in the poll book, the improper administration of the associated oaths/declarations and general discomfort with the voting scenarios and the appropriate completion of the associated administrative steps.

REGO training

For the REGOs, feedback was similar to that of the DRO and PC. Overall, feedback was positive on the ability to cover the material to a sufficient level in the 3-hour allotted timeframe, given that the responsibilities of the REGO and information officers are fewer and less complex that those of DRO and PC. However, given that the REGO is responsible for identifying the voting scenario and initiating the appropriate certificate in an effort to streamline the process, feedback from REGOs demonstrated that they would have benefitted from more practice examples and role playing related to the different scenarios, the certificates and the other tools required to be used.

4.4.1.3   Tools and guidance

As part of the delivery of the training program, participants were provided with guidebooks to use as a reference when serving electors. In addition, the role of central poll supervisor exists to provide support and guidance to election officials when serving electors. As part of their duties, the central poll supervisor has been encouraged to conduct regular touch points with election officials responsible for greeting, registering and serving electors to address and resolve any questions or concerns in relation to the discharge of their responsibilities. In addition, expectations were set with the central poll supervisor to periodically conduct quality checks related to the documentation being completed by the election officials to identify and resolve any issues in a timely manner.

As noted above, given the amount of background content that had to be included in the in-class training, although the voting scenarios, the certificates, the poll book and the associated oaths were covered in training, insufficient time was able to be spent in-class to sufficiently cover these topics. Accordingly, the guidebooks were a useful resource for election officials in preparation for and on advance and ordinary poll days. Feedback from DROs, PCs and REGOs confirmed the usefulness of the guidebooks as a quick reference (if time permitted) if they were unsure of how to proceed. Some individuals took the opportunity to highlight the guidebooks, including the organization and index of the guidebooks to facilitate efficient navigation through the topics. General feedback from the election officials confirmed that the central poll supervisor was available as a support in case there were questions about a specific voting scenario or how to complete the associated documentation. These support tools and functions mitigated, to some extent, the risk of inappropriate administration of the different voting scenarios.

5 Additional considerations

The following were topics noted during the course of our audit but were not directly related to the scope of our audit and, as a result, did not impact our overall conclusion against audit objectives.

5.1 Current electoral process

The electoral process can be very complex, manual and time consuming as a result of the constraint applied by the current legislation. This, coupled with the increased elector turnout, placed pressure on the process resulting in long wait lines which were often attributed to election officials having to rewrite a lot of information.

The current process to serve electors is inherently a very manual process. For regular voters, this requires the PC to search through dozens of pages of the List of Electors to find the elector's name and then once their identification and residency is validated, using a ruler, crossing the elector's name off and recording that they have voted. For those requiring the administration of special procedures, the manual nature of the process includes initiating and completing a certificate, including in many cases, the signature of the elector and, in all cases, the signature of the DRO and a corresponding entry in the poll book. In cases where a registration certificate is required, the REGO must manually search for the address of the elector in the poll key which can be several hundreds of pages to find the corresponding polling division. In the case of an oath of residence, an additional signature is required on the certificate – that of the attestor.

Manual processes inherently lead to human error. This is intensified when election officials are faced with pressure of long line-ups, dissatisfied electors and are not fully comfortable with the different voting scenarios and the associated paperwork. This was corroborated by our findings outlined in Section 4 of this report.

We recognize that an automated process has been and continues to be contemplated by EC; however, we acknowledge that, to date, the organization has focused its efforts on establishing efficient and effective processes given the current manual operating environment.

5.2 Advance poll activities

As noted earlier, elector attendance at advance polls increased significantly in the 42nd General Election as compared to the previous election. Advance polling took place over Thanksgiving Day weekend and included one extra day: Sunday of the long weekend.

Typically, the majority of those who attend advance polls are regular voters who do not require the administration of special procedures. This allows the process to serve electors to go quickly; however, an additional form is required to be completed by the PC, unique to advance polls. The record of votes cast requires the PC to document the elector's full name and full address, and then the elector is asked to sign the document as well. Once the elector has voted, the PC confirms this by marking the elector off as "voted" on the form. The record of votes cast requires the signature of the elector confirming they have voted as part of an advance poll in case challenges arise downstream should that elector attempt to vote on election day.

As a result of the exceptional voter turnout at advance polls and the additional manual paperwork required to serve each elector, significant delays and line-ups were experienced at polling stations across the country. Anecdotal information gathered saw electors waiting in lines for up to two hours to cast their ballot. This led to extreme frustration and dissatisfaction from electors. In addition, election officials, specifically PCs, faced their own challenges in terms of keeping up with the number of electors in line and focusing on serving in the best interest of the elector. Our audit procedures at advance polls saw a multitude of unique processes implemented in order for the election officials to be as efficient as possible, including:

- serving multiple electors at a time (i.e. not waiting until the previous elector had cast their ballot before accepting another elector at the polling station desk)

- reallocating duties at the polling station (i.e. having the DRO assume tasks beyond reviewing ID and issuing ballot)

- leveraging less busy election officials (i.e. REGO, information officer and central poll supervisor) to complete some administrative activities (i.e. marking all electors on the record of votes cast as having voted after the sheet was completed and subsequent to the elector having cast his/her ballot and left the polling station)

Overall, despite the various approaches that election officials took to streamline the process and serve electors in the most efficient manner possible, the requirement to manually complete the record of votes cast continued to result in inefficiencies by election officials and delays and frustration by electors.

6 Conclusion

We conclude that election officials properly exercised the powers conferred on them, and properly performed the duties and functions imposed on them under sections 143 to 149, 161 to 162 and 169 of the CEA, on all days of advance polling and on polling day for the 42nd Canadian General Election.

Overall, our testing results confirmed that regular electors (approximately 90% of electors) were processed appropriately. EC officials properly performed their duties and functions by verifying elector identification, issuing a ballot and documenting that electors cast their ballot. For the 10% of electors who were subject to special procedures, overall, the testing results confirmed that identification of the electors was verified appropriately, including the duties performed by the REGO; however, some of the administrative procedures were not performed consistently. Despite this, our audit noted that election officials consistently acted in the best interest of the electors and worked diligently to ensure the most positive election experience for all.

Our audit identified situations where the administration of special procedures was not always completed in accordance with procedures, including the completion of appropriate documentation and obtaining signatures from electors, where necessary. This was directly linked to the provision of training whereby election officials did not feel that the training programs fully equipped them for the administrative responsibilities associated with these special procedures.

In reaching our conclusion, we considered the following factors.

1. We were not charged with auditing the election results, our scope was limited and did not touch on the duties of all election officials and we did not assess all of the duties of the election officials we did observe. For example, we did not observe the counting of the ballots and recording and reporting of voting results.

2. We did not note any major findings relative to regular voters.

3. We noted one major finding relative to special procedures.

4. We did observe and have reported certain errors and mistakes in documentation and record-keeping relative to both regular voters and those requiring special procedures and have reported those errors and mistakes that we believe to be significant as "other observations"; however, in reaching our conclusion, we were cognizant of the observations of the Supreme Court of Canada who observed inter alia, that "Given the complexity of administering a federal election, the tens of thousands of election workers involved, many of whom have no on-the-job experience, and the short timeframe for hiring and training them, it is inevitable that administrative mistakes will be made". (*Opitz v. Wrzesnewskyj*, 2012 SCC 55)

Accordingly, while we believe that EC can and should improve its processes and controls to minimize the number of record-keeping errors and, where appropriate, recommend changes to the legislation that will simplify some of the complex requirements currently in place, the issues that we observed and reported do not affect our underlying conclusion as set out above.

Appendices

Appendix A – Recommendations

Given the results of the audit, the following recommendations are being proposed for consideration by the CEO. It should be noted that some of the recommendations, if implemented, could eliminate the need for others. In some cases, implementation may require legislative changes. It is suggested that each recommendation be fully evaluated and if a decision is made to proceed, each one should be tested fully before full implementation.

Recommendation 1

1. We recommend that the CEO consider a series of activities to modernize the electoral process with an aim to increasing the efficiency and accuracy of the administrative elements, specifically:

    a. automate components of the electoral process to serve electors such as locating elector on the List of Electors and noting which elector has voted

EC response

We agree with this recommendation. Work has already begun to identify elements of the electoral process at the polls that could benefit from automation. We will carefully assess risks, benefits and costs, and will conduct tests before automating elements of the process at all polling stations in a general election. We will engage stakeholders as these initiatives evolve.

Recommendation 2

2. We recommend that the CEO explore opportunities for streamlining procedures, specifically:

    a. review the advance poll process and associated controls to ensure the continued relevancy of, and optimizing opportunities to streamline, the process, including aligning the advance poll processes with general election day processes (to allow for streamlined training/tools)

    b. introduce a special procedures desk (potentially to replace the registration desk) for each polling site where all special procedures would be administered, including the administration of the oaths/declarations and the completion of the certificates

    c. clarify and simplify the forms and certificates associated with the special procedures to avoid duplication

EC response

We agree with the findings and the recommendation in this area. Work has already begun to review functions and procedures at the polls in order to simplify them. We will be making recommendations to Parliament to modify the *Canada Elections Act* in line with this objective.

Recommendation 3

3. We recommend that the CEO consider enhancements to the existing training program to ensure that necessary focus/time is given to the administration of the special procedures and to ensure election officials understand why/how to complete the activities, specifically:

    a. revise training approach to focus on the specific duties of the target audiences (for example those handling special voting circumstances and procedures)

    b. enhance the current training program to include walk-throughs of the process, role playing and samples/practice examples of the various scenarios

c. through training emphasize the role of the central poll supervisor in ensuring the completeness and accuracy of the administration/record-keeping associated with special procedures, including ongoing supervision of the activities at the polling station and registration desk as electors are being served

EC response

We will be reviewing and updating our training to reflect any changes that result from automation and simplified procedures and functions at polling places. At the same time, we will take into account the specific recommendations made by PricewaterhouseCoopers regarding training.

Appendix B – Audit criteria

Audit objective	Audit criteria	Audit subcriteria
Compliance		
Assessment of whether DROs, PCs and REGOs have, on all days of advance polling and on polling day, properly exercised the powers conferred on them, and properly performed the duties and functions imposed on them, under sections 143 to 149, 161 to 162 and 169 of the CEA.	DROs, PCs and REGOs performed their duties as prescribed by sections 143 to 149, 161 to 162 and 169 of the CEA.	Election officials establish a person's qualification to register and/or vote, e.g. obtain proof of identity and residence and elector's signature on registration certificate declaring to being a Canadian citizen and at least 18 years old.
		REGOs and DROs identify situations when special procedures must be administered to qualify an elector.
		REGOs, DROs and PCs administer the prescribed procedures and forms in accordance with the CEA.
		DROs administer the required oaths.
		Forms and related election documents are duly completed.
Administrative controls		
Assessment of the degree to which the administrative controls established by EC, including manuals and training material, support election officials in the exercise of their powers and performance of their duties and functions in accordance with section 164.1 of the CEA.	Adequate tools, guidance and training are provided to election officials to ensure accurate and consistent exercise of power and duties in accordance with sections 143 to 149, 161 to 162 and 169 of the CEA.	Training courses have been designed to equip election officials to efficiently and effectively take on the duties and functions of their specific roles.
		Training officers have appropriate qualifications and training themselves to effectively deliver training to a large number of non-specialists in a very short time period.
		Training officers provide training consistently to election officials in accordance with the training expectations/program of EC.
		Election officials obtain the appropriate training programs and tools given their assigned responsibilities.
		Training officers conduct comprehension tests and use other tools to evaluate and assess whether election officials have the competencies and abilities to fulfill their duties.
		Mechanisms are in place for election officials to highlight any need for additional training or support prior to exercising their duties.
		Tools, guidance materials and functions have been established to support election officials in assuming the duties and functions of their specific roles.

Appendix C – Glossary of terms

Term	Definition
C-23	Bill C-23
CEA	*Canada Elections Act*
CEO	Chief Electoral Officer
CSAE	Canadian Standards on Assurance Engagements 3001: *Direct Engagements*
DRO	Deputy returning officer
EC	Elections Canada
ED	Electoral district
PC	Poll clerk
PwC	PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP
REGO	Registration officer
RO	Returning officer