

**2002 Survey of Voters  
and Non-voters**

***Methodology Report***

**Prepared for: Elections Canada**

**Date: June 2002**

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## Introduction

As the agency responsible for the conduct of Canadian federal elections and referendums, Elections Canada plays a key role in the functioning of Canada’s democracy. Elections Canada conducts regular reviews of its performance in the conduct of electoral events and contributes to the development of legislative and administrative improvements to the electoral process.

Following declining voter turnouts throughout the 1990s, the voter turnout at the Canadian general election of 2000 (61 percent) was the lowest on record. It is in this context that Elections Canada developed a research project aimed at evaluating the opinions and attitudes of non-voters, and to provide additional insight into the reasons for non-voting at federal elections. The objective of this research is to assist in further defining and comprehending the phenomenon of non-voting.

As part of this project, Decima Research Inc. was commissioned to conduct a survey of Canadians who were eligible electors at the time of the 2000 Canadian general election, including equal proportions of voters and non-voters. The survey covered a variety of socio-demographic, attitudinal, and contextual factors, in order to explain the phenomenon of non-voting in Canadian federal elections. This short report contains the methodological details of the study, as well as information on the completed sample.

## Detailed Methodology

### Overall Approach

Elections Canada clearly identified the overall research approach for conducting this survey with voters and non-voters in its request for proposals. The survey was conducted by telephone, using a short “screening” questionnaire and a longer survey. The short screener was used to identify eligible respondents – electors at the time of the 2000 federal election<sup>1</sup> – and to collect a limited amount of general information about a larger base of Canadians. The long questionnaire was administered to a representative selection of voters and to self-reported non-voters identified through the screening questionnaire.

### Questionnaire Design

A draft questionnaire was prepared by Elections Canada. In consultation with the Elections Canada project team, Decima reviewed the questionnaire, taking into account question wording and ordering. Appropriate transitions and section introductions were also added. Prior to being finalized, the questionnaire was pre-tested on a small number of respondents.

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<sup>1</sup> An elector is a Canadian citizen aged 18 years of age or older at the time of an election.

## Sample Design and Selection

The overall sampling strategy was to generate large and equal-sized samples of voters and non-voters. In addition, over-sampling was required in less populous regions to allow statistically meaningful analysis of the results for those areas. The following table presents the regional quotas established for this study.

Region/Province	Completed Interviews	
	%	N
Atlantic	12.5%	240
Quebec	25%	480
Ontario	30%	576
Prairies	20%	384
British Columbia	12.5%	240
<b>Canada (total)</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,920</b>

The sample was also designed to include a relatively large group of self-reported non-voters, requiring the application of additional quotas. Based on past experience with self-reports of non-voting, a 17 percent incidence of self-reported non-voting was assumed. Given this incidence rate, the length of the survey questionnaire, and the resources available for the project, a completed sample of 1,920 was settled upon (including 960 voters and 960 non-voters). In order to achieve this number of completions, an overall completed sample of approximately 5,647 was required, of which approximately 17 percent, or 960, were expected to be non-voters. Of the remaining 4,687 voters, 960 were selected at random to complete the long survey and the remainder completed the short survey.

The regional and voter/non-voter quotas established resulted in the sampling plan presented in the following table.

Region/Province	Long Surveys: Non-voters	Long Surveys: Voters	Short Surveys: Voters	Total
Newfoundland	28	28	49	105
Nova Scotia	47	47	83	177
P.E.I.	7	7	12	26
New Brunswick	38	38	67	143
<b>Atlantic subtotal</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>451</b>
<b>Quebec</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>1,380</b>
<b>Ontario</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>1,556</b>	<b>2,131</b>
Manitoba	43	44	127	214
Saskatchewan	39	38	114	191
Alberta	107	108	318	533
<b>Prairies subtotal</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>559</b>	<b>943</b>
<b>B.C.</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>490</b>	<b>740</b>
<b>Canada (total)</b>	<b>964</b>	<b>965</b>	<b>3,716</b>	<b>5,645</b>

The sample was drawn using SurveySampler technology, which ensures that all residential listings in the target population have an equal opportunity to be selected for inclusion in the survey. Within the household, if more than one resident was an eligible elector at the time of the 2000 general election (at least 18 years of age and a Canadian citizen in November 2000), one participant was selected using the “last birthday” method, which provides an efficient means of ensuring the sample approximates the population according to gender and age level. Up to eight callbacks were used to reach selected respondents who may not have been available at the time of the call.

## Survey Administration

The survey was conducted in English and French, by telephone, using computer-assisted-telephone-interviewing (CATI) technology. It was carried out from Decima’s facilities in Ottawa and Montreal between April 4 and May 9, 2002. All interviewing was conducted by fully trained and supervised interviewers, and a minimum of 15 percent of completed interviews were independently monitored and validated in real time. The short surveys averaged 4.4 minutes in length and the long surveys averaged 24.75 minutes.

## Sampling Error

The final completed sample includes 968 reported non-voters, and 988 voters who completed long surveys, for a total of 1,956 long survey completions. An additional 3,681 short surveys were completed by reported voters, for a total completed sample of 5,637. A sample of 5,637 Canadians can be expected to provide results accurate to within plus or minus 1.3 percent, 19 times out of 20. The full sample of long surveys (1,956) can be considered accurate to within plus or minus 2.2 percent at the 95 percent confidence level, and the sample of non-voters (968) has an approximate margin of error of 3.2 percent, also at the 95 percent confidence level.

The completed regional samples, and the approximate margin of error for each are presented in the following table.

	Sample Size	Approximate Margin of Error
Atlantic	242	± 6.3
Quebec	483	± 4.5
Ontario	576	± 4.1
Prairies	396	± 4.9
British Columbia	259	± 6.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,956</b>	<b>± 2.2%</b>

As over-sampling was used in the less populous regions, it is necessary to weight the data back to actual population proportions prior to conducting analysis of the data. To this end, a weight variable is included in the data file prepared for this project.

## Response Rate

The following table shows the final disposition of all telephone numbers dialed.

<b>Total numbers dialed</b>		<b>46,664</b>
Not in service	6,182	
Fax	1,020	
Business number	627	
<b>Total eligible</b>		<b>38,835</b>
Busy	804	
Answering machine	4,075	
No answer	5,877	
Language barrier	1,124	
Ill/Incapable	0	
Eligible not available/Callback	1,852	
Quota full – NOT QUALIFIED		4,036
<b>Total asked</b>		<b>25,103</b>
Household refusal	2,808	
Respondent refusal	13,052	
Termination before qualifying	987	
Qualified termination	495	
<b>Co-operative contact</b>		<b>7,761</b>
Not qualified	740	
Quota full – QUALIFIED		1,383
<b>Completed interviews</b>		<b>5,638</b>