

Government On-Line Research Panel - Results from the Tenth Online Survey (April 2007)

Executive Summary

Background

The federal government has maintained an Internet Research Panel since 2001 in support of the Government of Canada (GC)'s service vision, which includes bringing its most frequently used services online and working to improve citizen satisfaction -related to government service delivery. The panel is used to consult with Canadian Internet users, including users and non-users of government Web sites, at periodic intervals on issues related to eGovernment as well as other policy and program related issues. Phase 5 has been engaged since June 2003 to refresh and maintain the panel for a four-year period.

This report presents the findings from the tenth survey conducted with Government Online Research Panel members. A total of 5,284 panellists completed the tenth survey. The margin of error for overall results is estimated to be +/- 0.96%, somewhat higher for most audience sub-groups.

Key Findings

The tenth online survey of the GOL Panel revealed the following:

Attitudes Towards GC Online Services

- For the fifth consecutive year respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagree with a series of statements designed to assess their attitudes towards the Government of Canada and its online services.
- Respondents' reactions to the GC's online service delivery are fairly positive and relatively similar to Survey 8 results. However, there are interesting exceptions. Respondents were more likely to agree (5% increase) the most commonly-used Government of Canada services are online and less likely to agree (5% decrease) Government of Canada online services are fast, convenient, easy to access and always available.
- Agreement was strongest on statements related to flexibility, level of service and privacy and security. As in previous surveys, fewer agree that online services are fast, convenient, easy to access and always available and that the most commonly used services are available online. Lower agreement was also observed related to one of two new statements that, in recent years, the GC has improved the quality of service it provides to Canadians. Agreement was even lower on this statement among Household Internet panellists.

Quality of Language Used on GC Web Sites

- The majority of respondents (78%) agreed that the language used on Government of Canada Web sites is easy to understand. The overall mean agreement score was 4.00 out of 5. Very few (6%) disagreed with this statement. The majority (64%) of panellists also indicated that they rarely or never have not understood the text on a GC Web site because the language used was too complicated. Some 31% indicated that it sometimes happens and only 5% indicated that it often or always happens.

- A small majority of panellists (59%) have never had to contact the Government of Canada off-line because the language used on a Government of Canada Web sites was too complicated. However, 16% have had to contact the Government of Canada once and another 16% have had to contact them 2 to 5 times. Only 3% indicated they contacted the Government of Canada more than 5 times due to complicated language used on their Web sites.
- The vast majority of panellists (91%) indicated that the overall quality of language used on Government of Canada Web sites is good or very good. Only 1% indicated that it was poor and less than 1% indicated it was very poor, resulting in a mean score of 4.37 out of 5.

Identification, Privacy & Security

Authentication

- A strong majority of panellists (81%) would prefer to use the same user name and password across all government of Canada on-line services, while 64% would prefer to use the same username and password across all federal, provincial/territorial and municipal on-line services.
- There was some concern that using the same username and password across a number of online transactions with the Government would make users more susceptible to identity theft. While 36% of panellists indicated they would not be more concerned about identity theft, 39% indicated they would be more concerned, 17% of which indicated they would be extremely concerned.

Sharing of Personal Information

- Respondents were asked their opinions related to the sharing of personal information by the Government of Canada. The majority of respondents (76%) believed that they should be asked each and every time for their consent and 21% believed that they should only be asked for their consent one time before personal information is shared across the Government of Canada. When comparing results to Survey 6, there has been a large increase (19%) in the proportion of panellists who believed they should be asked each and every time for their consent and a corresponding decrease (19%) in the proportion who believed that they should only be asked for their consent one time.
- Provided with the opportunity to indicate preferences related to changing personal information, a small majority (52%) of panellists preferred the change to be reflected with all Government of Canada departments and partnering levels of government. Just over one-third (35%) preferred the change be reflected only with all Government of Canada departments that hold their personal information and 14% preferred the change be reflected only with the one Government of Canada department being accessed.
- In terms of opinions related to providing personal identification information to the Government of Canada, the results were divided. One half (51%) preferred that the Government of Canada know enough about them to proactively offer them services they qualify for while the other half (49%) preferred to provide the Government of Canada with information on a need to know basis only.

Privacy and Security

- Although results for Survey 10 show that concern with conducting online transactions that would require them to exchange personal or confidential information with the Government of

Canada over the Internet has decreased somewhat, there is still concern among one in three participants. Some 12% of panellists were “extremely concerned” about transmitting confidential information and 20% were “somewhat concerned.” However, there has been a 4% decrease in the proportion of panellists who are “extremely concerned” since Survey 8. Just under half (46%) of all respondents stated they were not concerned with transmitting confidential information (18% “not at all” concerned and 28% “somewhat unconcerned”).

- The results show that there is uncertainty around whether the Government of Canada has ever experienced a data security breach of its online systems. While one-quarter of respondents (25%) were reasonably sure that there has not been a data security breach, 23% believed that it has happened and another 40% were not sure, but believed that it probably has happened.
- Similar to findings from Survey 6, a strong majority (88%) of respondents believed that the Government of Canada should provide an annual report to Parliament that is accessible to all Canadians and the media on the number of security breaches it has experienced in relation to personal information of Canadians.
- A small majority (52%) of panellists indicated that by allowing the media to report statistics on Government security breaches to the Canadian public would increase their confidence in the security of the Government of Canada’s systems, a 6% decrease since this question was first asked in Survey 6.

Science.gc.ca

Interest in Scientific and Technical Information

- Most panellists were at least somewhat interested in the field of science with a strong majority (83%) indicating they were somewhat or very interested. Only 14% stated a little interested and 3% stated not at all interested.
- A strong majority (84%) of panellists had actively sought science-related information on the Internet in the past 6 months with 45% indicating they had done so more than 5 times, 30% who had done so 2 to 5 times and 9% who had done so only once. Only 10% of those interested in science-related information had not actively sought it out on the Internet in the past 6 months.
- When panellists were asked how they typically search for science-related information on the Internet, a small majority (54%) indicated that they usually look for an answer to a specific question. Approximately one-quarter (26%) usually browse with general curiosity about science topics and 8% usually come across it when looking for something else.

Science.gc.ca Web Site

- Panellists were shown an image of the Government of Canada’s science and technology Web site Home page and asked whether they had ever visited the site. Some 10% of panellists had visited the Science.gc.ca Web site and a further 5% were not sure.
- When asked what elements or sections of the Science.gc.ca home page were of most interest, the majority of panellists were more interested in the “Featured Links” (61%) and “Subject directory of links” (60%) . There was also some interest in the “Newsroom” (36%), “Did You Know?” (34%), and “Search” (32%) features.
- Next, panellists were asked, in an open-ended question, what, if anything, they would like to see added to the Science.gc.ca Web site. Half (50%) of all respondents did not know and another one-third (32%) indicated that the site did not need any additions. Among the 18% who suggested additions, the most popular included resources for children and teachers

(10%) followed by information on climate change/global warming/energy conservation (8%), improvements to site visual appeal (8%), outside links to science-related sites (7%), health-related topics (7%) and other environmental issues (6%).

- The survey also explored the usefulness of current and science resources that are being considered for the Science.gc.ca Web site. Overall, “Maps” (75%) were deemed most useful by respondents, followed by “Educational Resources on Science” (60%), “Science Research Reports” (50%) and “Science Glossaries” (53%).
- Respondents were asked how they would like to view information on Canadian achievements in science. Just under half (48%) preferred profiles of inventions and discoveries, 26% a historical timeline, 19% full-length articles and 6% personal profiles of inventors/researchers.
- In terms of the preferred way to receive science news electronically, some 43% preferred to subscribe to an e-newsletter and 35% preferred to read an online magazine-style article on a science topic. Only 8% preferred to subscribe to a science news feed and 6% preferred to read a blog by a Canadian science expert.

Service Canada

Advertising Recall

- Respondents were first asked whether they had seen or heard any Service Canada advertisements to raise awareness of its role as a one-stop access service network for the Government of Canada. Overall, 32% of panellists had noticed these advertisements and 56% had not.
- When asked where they had noticed these ads, over three-quarters (77%) of panellists had noticed the advertisements on television followed by the newspaper (23%), on the Service Canada Web site (17%) and on the radio (16%).

Visits to the Service Canada Web Site

- Next, panellists were asked how many times they have visited the Service Canada Web site since January 1, 2007. A small majority (59%) of panellists had visited the Service Canada Web site since January 1st with 21% indicating they had visited the site more than 5 times, 25% indicating they had visited the site 2 to 5 times and 13% indicating they had visited the site only once. Some 37% of panellists had not visited the Service Canada Web site since January 1, 2007.
- Respondents who had visited the Service Canada Web site since January 1, 2007, were asked to specify the reason(s) for their visit(s). Many respondents were visiting the Service Canada Web site to obtain a government form (42%) and to use job ads/Job Bank (42%). Many were also visiting the site with an information need – to obtain information about Service Canada and/or its programs and services (39%), to obtain information about government programs and services (38%) and to obtain contact information (26%). In contrast, very few were visiting the site related to Old Age Security of Canada Pension Plan – to view the CPP Statements of Contribution on-line (8%), to view CPP/OAS/EI tax slips (5%) and to apply for CPP/OAS retirement benefits online (4%).

Listing of Government Services

- The survey also explored preferences with respect to ways in which information can be presented on Government of Canada Web sites.

- Respondents were first asked the extent to which it would be useful to identify the level or government that provides a particular service. A strong majority of panellists indicated it would be very or somewhat useful to identify the level of government with 57% indicating “very useful” and 27% indicating “somewhat useful”.
- There was no clear preference to way in which the level of government that provides a particular service is presented on Government of Canada Web sites. While 48% preferred federal information in a single list with source indicated, 47% preferred federal and provincial information grouped by source.
- Panellists were also asked to specify how they would like information on different channels to be presented. Some 44% of panellists preferred to first be presented with a simple list of all channels and then after selecting their preferred channel be presented with detailed information on how to apply using that channel. Another 20% preferred to be directed straight to the on-line application and 21% preferred to be presented with detailed information on all channels and then select their preferred channel.
- When asked their preference for the way in which information is presented, the majority of respondents preferred information to be presented as a series of headings that are hyperlinked to full text on a separate page as opposed to information presented as a series of headings with text below it on the same page and a link to more information. They thought this appeared to be easiest to find the specific information (78%), appeared to be easiest to use (71%) and, to a lesser extent, appeared easiest to understand (66%). This option was also preferred overall (71%).
- Panellists were then asked which option they preferred for titles to introduce information – presented as either a question or a statement. Results were mixed. Some 53% preferred the title presented as a statement and 41% preferred titles presented as a question (Option A). The remainder had no preference.

Evaluation of GC Web Sites for Newcomers to Canada

- The survey explored three different Government of Canada Web sites that provide information to newcomers to Canada. The three sites evaluated were the Service Canada – Services for Newcomers to Canada Web site, the Citizenship and Immigration Web site and the Canadian International Web site.
- Panellists were first asked to indicate whether they were a newcomer to Canada or a non-Canadian currently living abroad interested in living in Canada in the future. Only 4% of panellists identified themselves as a newcomer to Canada and another 4% indicated that they currently live abroad and they are interested in living in Canada in the future.

Service Canada – Services for Newcomers Web site

- Newcomers to Canada and non-Canadians with an interest in living in Canada were presented with an image of the Service Canada – Services for Newcomers to Canada Web site and asked to indicate how many times they had visited this site in the past 6 months. About half (49%) of these panellists indicated they had visited the Service Canada – Services for Newcomers Web site – 11% indicating they had visited the site once, 17% 2 to 5 times and 21% 6 or more times.
- The section of this Web site that appealed to respondents the most was the “For Newcomers to Canada” section (31%) and, to a lesser extent, the “Immigration” (9%) and “On-Line Services” (8%) sections.
- Results for specific elements of the Home page were positive. A strong majority of panellists (81%) agreed that the Home page contains the information needed. The majority of

panellists also agreed that the home page is well-organized (79%) and the Home page is visually appealing (76%).

Citizenship and Immigration

- Next, newcomers to Canada and non-Canadians with an interest in living in Canada were presented with an image of the Citizenship and Immigration (CIC) Web site and asked to indicate how many times they had visited this site in the past 6 months. The Citizenship and Immigration Web site was more used than the Services for Newcomers to Canada Web site with about 67% of panellists indicating they had visited the site in the past 6 months. The CIC Web site also appears to be more frequently visited with 12% indicating they had visited the site once, 20% 2 to 5 times and 35% 6 or more times.
- The section of the CIC Home page that appealed to respondents the most was the “How Do I” section (12%) and, to a lesser extent, the “Choose Canada” (8%) and “For Your Information” (7%) sections.
- Similar to the results for the Service Canada – Services for Newcomers to Canada Home page, results for specific elements of the CIC Home page were also positive. A strong majority of panellists (81%) agreed that the Home page contains the information needed. The majority of panellists also agreed that the Home page is well organized (79%) and the Home page is visually appealing (76%).

Canada International

- Next, panellists were presented with an image of the Canada International Web site and asked to indicate how many times they had visited this site in the past 6 months. The Canada International Web site was visited less than the previous two Web sites. One-third (33%) of panellists indicated they had visited the Canada International Web site in the past 6 months. Panellists who had visited the Canada International Web site did so infrequently with 11% indicating they had visited the site once, 14% 2 to 5 times and 9% 6 or more times.
- The section of the Canada International Home page that appealed to respondents the most was the “Going to Canada” section (22%) and, to a lesser extent, the “Canada and the World” (8%) and “Doing Business With Canada” (7%) sections.
- Results for specific elements of the Canada International Home page were slightly more positive than for the CIC Home page and slightly less positive than for the Services for Newcomers Home page. While the majority of panellists (77%) agreed that the Home page is well organized and 73% indicated that the Home page is visually appealing (76%), the lowest score was related to the Home page containing the information needed (70%).

Overall Preference

- After reviewing the three Home pages, panellists were asked to indicate which of the three Web sites was most relevant to them. The CIC Web site was selected as the most relevant site over 4 in 10 respondents. In contrast, 3 in 10 selected the Services for Newcomers to Canada Web site and just over 1 in 10 selected the Canada International Web site.
- Finally, panellists were asked which of the three Web sites they will most likely return to visit in the future. Similar to overall relevance, 43% of panellists indicated that they would most likely return to the Citizenship and Immigration Web site followed by the Service Canada – Services for Newcomers to Canada Web site (27%) and the Canada international Web site (19%). However, the likeliness to return to a particular Web site may vary depending on the specific information need.

Federal Accountability Act

- Respondents were asked to what extent they were familiar with the *Federal Accountability Act* and then asked to provide opinions related to Government of Canada accountability.
- One-quarter of panellists are at least somewhat familiar with the Federal Accountability Act with 3% indicating they are very familiar and 23% stating they are somewhat familiar with the Act. Approximately 41% of panellists have heard of the Act but do not know anything about it and another 33% have never heard of the *Federal Accountability Act*.
- Respondents' reactions when asked about government accountability are fairly negative. Some 36% of panellists agreed that public servants are being accountable to Canadians, 21% agreed that the Government of Canada is doing enough to improve the overall management of its operations and only 16% agreed that they have enough information about what the Government of Canada accomplished with taxpayer's dollars. Panellists who were very familiar with the *Federal Accountability Act* and who worked in the federal government were more likely to agree with all statements related to government accountability.
- The majority of panellists do not agree that accountability in the Government of Canada has improved with 41% stating it has stayed the same and 29% stating it has deteriorated. Almost one-third did state that there has been some improvement.

BizPaL and Business permit and Licensing

Business Owners and Managers

- Some 13% of panellists are directly involved in the management of a Canadian-owned business and 87% were not. Panellists who are directly involved in the management of a business were asked what their role was within their organization. A small majority (60%) of panellists are owners/co-owners followed by 17% who are Managers/supervisors, 11% who are Senior Managers and 10% who are CEOs/Presidents.

BizPaL

- Respondents who are directly involved in the management of a Canadian-owned organization were asked whether they ever heard of BizPaL. The BizPaL service is expanding to cities across Canada in a controlled roll-out. With this in mind it is not surprising that, overall, only 14% of panellists had heard of BizPaL and 86% had not. GOL panellists (16%) were more likely to have heard of BizPaL than Household Internet panellists (6%).
- When asked where they had learned about BizPaL, the majority (65%) of panellists stated they had learned about BizPaL online followed by word of mouth (35%). Very few (6%) said they had learned about BizPaL through local newspaper, radio (1%) or television (1%).
- Panellists who had heard of BizPaL believed that an on-line tool such as BizPaL is of value to them and their organization with 45% indicating it is very valuable and 28% indicating it is somewhat valuable. This resulted in an overall mean score of 4.10 out of 5.

Business Permits and License Requirements

- Respondents who are directly involved in the management of a Canadian-owned organization were asked who within the organization is responsible for business permits and license requirements. A small majority (68%) of business panellists who responded to the survey were responsible for business and license requirements within their organization. Within some organizations business permits and license requirements are handled by an

employee in the organization (21%) while a few (9%) use an intermediary outside of the organization.

- In terms of how frequently their business deals with permit and licensing related issues, a small majority of panellists (57%) deal with permit and licensing related issues on a yearly basis. Some 6% indicated that they deal with these issues monthly and 10% stated they deal with permit and licensing related issues weekly or less frequently.
- Many panellists (44%) were unsure how many days per year are spent dealing with permit and licensing related issues. Among those that did know, 20% indicated that they have only had to deal with these issues once and 10% stated they have never had to deal with permit and licensing related issues. Some 9% indicated that have dealt with these issues twice, 5% three times and 12% 4 or more times.

Evaluation of the Canada Business Web Site

- The next series of questions in the survey focused on the Canada Business Web site. Respondents who had visited the Canada Business Web site since February 2, 2007 were asked to evaluate the experience. Panellists who had not visited the site within this timeframe were asked to visit the take a few moments to browse around the site at the time they completed the survey and to evaluate the site based on this visit. Non-users were asked to take a few moments to browse around the site.
- Some 15% of respondents had visited the Canada Business Web site since February 2, 2007. The results also show that business respondents were more likely to have visited the Canada Business Web site since February 2, 2007 (15% compared to 6% of the general population).
- Panellists who had not visited the Canada Business Web site since February 2, 2007 were presented with an image of the Home page and asked the extent to which they were interested in the type of information provided on the site. Overall, 41% indicated they were somewhat or very interested, 18% a little interested and only 6% not at all interested. Not surprisingly, business respondents were much more likely to be somewhat (42% compared to 27% of the general population) or very (34% compared to 10% of the general population) interested in the type of information provided on the Canada Business Web site.
- The majority of panellists who had visited the site since February 2, 2007 had a positive experience in finding information on the Canada Business Web site. Some 38% of respondents were able to find everything, a 10% increase since Survey 9, and another 37% were able to find most of the information sought. Only 2% of panellists were unable to find any of the information they were looking for. Business respondents were more likely to have found most of the information they were looking for on the site (37% compared to 31%).
- Panellist who did not find all the information they were looking for were asked to specify, in an open-ended question, the information they were unable to find during their most recent visit. Some 17% of respondents were not able to find information on funding/loans/grants, 16% were unable to find information related to starting a business and 13% were unable to find legal/administrative advice or help. Business respondents were more likely to have not been able to find information on funding/loans/grants (20% compared to 16% of the general population).
- The majority of panellists were satisfied with the Canada Business Web site overall with 84% indicating they were satisfied, a 24% increase since survey 9, and only 3% were dissatisfied resulting in an overall mean satisfaction score of 4.17. Very few (1%) indicated they were very dissatisfied with the Canada Business Web site.
- In addition to providing an overall satisfaction rating, respondents were asked to rate specific elements of the Canada Business Web site. Panellists were positive about the new Canada

Business Web site particularly when compared to results from Survey 9. Panellists in Survey 10 were more likely to agree with all statements with the largest improvements observed on statements related to site content such as the information being at the right level of detail (17% increase) and the site containing more information than expected (15% increase).

- The highest scores were related to the relevance of the information (83% agreed), ease of use (83% agreed), site visual appeal (81% agreed) and the range of topics covered (81% agreed). Agreement was slightly less strong for statements related to the information being at the right level of detail (77% agreed) and the site containing more information than expected (71%). However, the majority of panellists did indicate they would recommend the site (86%) and would visit the site again (88%).
- The Canada Business Web site contains several new features. Panellists were asked the extent to which these new features are relevant to them. A strong majority of panellists indicated that a list of topics would be relevant (83%). The majority of panellists also indicated that “Online Services” (73%) and “Tools” (71%) were relevant to them and their business. “News and Updates” (63%) and “Feature Topics” (58%) were considered the least relevant to respondents. There were no statistically significant differences between business respondents and the general population.
- Finally, panellists were asked how important specific sections and features would be to them and their business. The most important sections and features included business information arranged by topic (87%), search our site feature (84%), online tools (83%) and online services (83%). Still considered important, but to a lesser extent were business information arranged by stage in the life-cycle of a business (75%), business information organized by industry sector (75%) and a list of the most popular documents requested by users (67%).

Suggestions for Additional Information or Services

- The final question in the survey asked respondents, in an open-ended question, what new information or services could be offered on Government of Canada Web sites that would be useful. The top five suggestions provided by panellists included business-related information (15%), laws, regulations, Government policy information (14%), cultural/historical information (9%), information on grants and loans (8%) and tax-related information (8%).