

# Government On-Line Research Panel – Results from the Fourth Online Survey (April 2004)

## Executive Summary

### Background

In support of the Government of Canada's service vision, which is to have its most frequently used services online and realize a 10% increase in citizen satisfaction with government service delivery by 2005, the federal government engaged Phase 5 to refresh and maintain the Government Online Research Panel over the next 1-2 years.

This report presents findings from the fourth survey conducted with Government Online Research Panel members. A total of 4,141 panelists completed the fourth survey. The margin of error for overall results is estimated to be +/-1.16%, slightly higher for audience sub-groups.

### Key Findings

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

#### Attitudes towards GOL Services:

- Panelists' reactions to the Government of Canada's online service delivery are fairly positive. Agreement was relatively strong that when dealing with the Government of Canada you can choose how to access information or services, that on-line delivery of Government of Canada services means better service and more choice for Canadians, and that the Government of Canada is committed to privacy and protection of personal information. Slightly less strong agreement was found that the GoC's on-line services are fast, convenient, easy to access and always available and that the most commonly-used Government of Canada services are on-line.

#### Channel Selection:

- Half of respondents indicated that their choice of whether to use the Web or to speak to someone from government would depend on the specific request or concern, while an additional 40% said they always choose the Web first.
- Just over half of respondents have telephoned the Government of Canada to follow up on information they had found on a Government of Canada Web site. The most common reasons stated for follow-up telephone contact was that respondents needed further clarification or interpretation.

#### Privacy and Security:

- Some 31% of panelists had some concern with conducting online transactions that would require them to exchange personal or confidential information with the Government of Canada over the Internet.
- Panelists had differing views on the extent to which information was being shared across departments, with or without consent.

- Most participants preferred the names 'Access Canada', '@ccess Canada', or 'ID Canada' for the service that validates a person's identity (epass).

#### **Government Accountability:**

- Interest in seeing certain Government of Canada financial activities (contracts, travel expenses, grants and contributions) on a Government of Canada Web site was surprisingly high.
- Most expected to be able to find Government of Canada financial activities on both relative departmental sites and a central site, such as the Canada site.

#### **Screen Resolution:**

- The vast majority of panelists have screen resolution settings greater than 640 x 480 and do not have an issue with there being white space on Government of Canada web sites as a result of the requirement for them to be designed at 640 x 480.

#### **Canada Site Home Page:**

- Panelists preferred the title 'On-line Forms and Services' for the section which contains on-line address changes and downloadable tax forms.
- Respondents preferred the titles 'Publications and Reports' or 'Government Publications' for the area of the Canada Site which provides information on obtaining various documents published by the Government of Canada.
- The existence of the Customization feature on the Canada site is not well known, nor widely used by respondents. Those who have used it are using it often, however.
- The majority of respondents preferred the Canada Site Home page design Option B in all circumstances, including overall preference. Participants indicated that Option B was most effective in showing the relationship between the three Gateways.
- A considerably larger proportion of respondents believed that presenting the Gateways in three columns (Option B) gave a better understanding of what each Gateway has to offer.

#### **Canadians Gateway Home Page:**

- The majority of respondents preferred the Canadians Gateway Home page design Option B.
- While a larger proportion of respondents preferred the audience-specific information to be presented with the topics in the centre of the page, many preferred the audience-specific information links to be presented on the left menu bar, separate from the topics links.
- Changes to the presentation of the audience links lead to different understandings among panelists of what will be found below. While a higher proportion of respondents thought that the presentation of the information within a specific audience link would be the same, many others thought that the presentation of the information would be slightly different. The vast majority of respondents preferred the placement of the quick visit / spotlight section on the top right corner of the Canadians Gateway Home page.
- Respondents thought that the 'Letter guides' did help them in understanding the layout of the page, and the majority expected the A to Z Index button to link to the same topic list as that found below the letter guides presented on the centre of the page.
- The majority of respondents expected most of the buttons on the left menu bar of the Canada Site to be carried over to the left navigation bar on the Canadians Gateway, and that it would be useful to see the links to the Non-Canadians Gateway and the Business Gateway in the left navigation bar on the Canadians Gateway.

### **Canada and the World:**

- Interest in the information contained within Canada and the World was high among panelists.
- Overall, respondents had a relatively favourable impression of the proposed Canada and the World Home page, stating that it appeared to be user-friendly and that it does a good job of indicating what content is available in this area of the site.
- Participants agreed that it is fully apparent that the eight topics are clickable, that the image behind the labels is appropriate, that the label themselves are appropriate and that the label are helpful in navigating the 'Join us in exploring...' area of the Web site.
- All of the topics featured in the 'Join us in exploring...' area of the site were viewed important to panelists. All of the topic headings in the 'Join us in exploring...' area of the Web site were seen as accurately describing the information contained within, but participants preferred the titles 'Environment', 'International Relations', 'World Peace and Security' and 'Research, Science & Technology'.
- Regarding the 'Latest Features' section, panelists indicated that the descriptive text that accompanies each link in this section is useful and that it is appropriate that this section is prominently featured on the Home page, given its content.
- Most felt the title 'Features Archive' accurately described the content of this section and that the button is displayed prominently enough on the home page.
- Panelists indicated that featuring the 'Ongoing Features' section prominently on the Home page is appropriate given its content, but that descriptive text should accompany each link to assist users in understanding what they will find below .

### **Canada International:**

- By and large, participants did not think that an email with an invitation to view a brief humorous video would prompt them to seek out more information, nor would they be likely to forward it to other people. Many also were less sure that it would be appropriate for the Government of Canada to make Web users aware of its services in this way.

### **National Capital Commissions Web Site:**

- Among panelists exposure to the NCC sites was limited, particularly the Corporate area of the site; however there was a moderate level of interest in the types of information available on the sites.
- Panelists preferred the heading 'Plan, Preserve and Develop' heading for the section of the site which contains information on planning, heritage and capital treasures, development and rehabilitation projects.
- 'Explore the Capital' or 'Discover the Capital' were the preferred headings for the section of the site which contains information on things to see and do in the National Capital Region.
- When asked which subjects would be most useful on the Home page of the NCC Web site, the vast majority of respondents said 'Calendar of Events', 'What's New / Current Affairs', and 'Contact Us' would be useful. Many also indicated that 'Frequently Asked Questions' and 'Employment Opportunities' would be useful.
- Under the heading 'Doing Business with the NCC, respondents primarily expected to find information concerning contracting with the NCC, use of NCC and other Federal lands, sponsorship opportunities and how to purchase or obtain guides / brochures.
- When respondents were asked to identify from a list the types of information they would expect to find on the NCC site, it was found that panelists were particularly interested in

information on what to see and do in the Capital, parks, heritage sites and Canadian symbols in the Capital and museums and attractions. Interest was high, but relatively less strong for information about the NCC and plans for the preservation and rehabilitation of the Capital.

### **Opportunities / Future Directions**

Based on these results, and Phase 5's experience gained through numerous other projects conducted with users of Government of Canada Web sites, the following items are put forward as opportunities / future directions for GOL:

- Focus on ensuring harmonization between the Web and phone channels. Half of respondents indicated that their use of the Web or to speak to someone from government would depend on the specific request or concern, and a similar proportion is often following up a Web visit with a phone call seeking clarification.
- Concerns continue to exist around conducting online transactions with the Government of Canada, underscoring the continued importance of communicating the security measures employed by the Government of Canada online.
- Panelists have many different impressions of the extent to which personal information is being shared across departments. Like online security, this is an area requiring continued ongoing communication of policies and procedures
- Before proceeding, further explore in a qualitative setting where it can be viewed, the use of videos sent by email and designed to promote the Government of Canada and its websites.
- Consider developing a 'government accountability' section on the Canada Site. While media attention to this subject may have had an impact on results, findings suggest that citizens are surprisingly curious about the spending habits of the Government of Canada.
- Satisfaction with the Government of Canada's online services was relatively high, but results suggest (in this and the previous survey) that there are opportunities to improve access, reliability, and turnaround times.
- Continue to communicate which Government of Canada services are currently available online.
- Continue the practice of periodically conducting usability testing on individual sites. Many panelists needed to contact the Government of Canada for clarification of information they had accessed on a GoC web site. Based on results from past research, greater depth and specificity of content continues to be an issue with information on GoC web sites.
- Low awareness of the customization feature, but high use among those who are aware, warrants further investigation in a qualitative research setting to explore benefits and test approaches to promoting this feature.
- Unless an inexpensive solution exists to re-size GoC sites for an individual computer's screen resolution, continue to design site for 640x480 as the large majority of panelists are unconcerned about white space on the right side of their browser.