

# Government On-Line Research Panel – Results from the Fifth Online Survey (January 2005)

## 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. Phase 5 was hired in June 2003 to refresh and maintain the panel for a two year period.

This report presents the findings from the fifth survey conducted with Government Online Research Panel members. A total of 6,607 panelists completed the fifth survey. The margin of error for overall results is estimated to be +/-0.95%, somewhat higher for most audience sub-groups.

### Key Findings

#### Evaluation of Panelists Most Recent Visit to a GoC Web site

- Most panelists access government Web sites through a bookmark, links on the Canada Site, an Internet search engine or by typing in the URL. A large majority of respondents found it easy to access GoC sites.
- Respondents are visiting GoC web sites primarily to obtain general information, to find an answer to a specific question or to search for a job. Only a small proportion are visiting GoC sites to complete a transaction (e.g. completing a form online), access a personal account, or to participate in citizen engagement.
- A large majority of respondents were satisfied with their most recent visit to a government of Canada Web site.
- Difficulties encountered were most often related to finding information (navigation, too many links / inefficient search engines) as opposed to content issues or technical problems.

#### Perceived Benefits of the Government Online Initiative

- Support for GOL is strong, particularly among panel members, younger respondents, more experienced Internet users and those living outside of Canada.
- A majority believe that information obtained from GoC Web sites is trustworthy, GOL will increase Canadians' ability to contact government, result in faster service, and represents good value to tax dollars. Many also believe that GOL services are protected and secure, will improve the quality of government service, and will raise public awareness of how government works.
- There has been a significant increase from Survey 3 to Survey 5 in the proportion of respondents that agree that GOL will result in faster service, who think it will be good value for tax dollars and will improve the quality of government service. For most statements there has been a continued steady increase since the First survey in 2002.

- The two most important perceived benefits of GOL were that it is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and it saves time.

### **Awareness of Existing Government On-Line Information and Services**

- Government On-line information and services most frequently accessed included weather information, health information, ability to apply for jobs, statistical information on Canada's population and the ability to file an individual tax return.
- Services that were not expected included virtual tours of National Museums and Galleries, the ability to register a firearm with the Government, and the ability to participate in public consultations.
- The majority of panelists find out about new on-line information or services available from the GoC through the Canada Site / GoC Web sites, and to a lesser extent through search engines and word of mouth.

### **Public Safety Portal**

- The large majority of panelists think that the 12 broad categories used on the Public Safety portal adequately cover the range of safety and security matters.
- In terms of local contact information being available on the Public Safety Portal, the majority of panelists thought it was important to include local contact information for hospitals, police services, public health, emergency preparedness, environmental health, fire stations, children's services, and victims' services.

### **Consulting Canadians Section of the Canada Site**

- The majority of panelists liked the current name for the 'Consulting Canadians' Web site. Those who did not like the current name were given the opportunity to provide an alternate name. The top suggestions included: 'Consulting with Canadians', 'Canadians / Canada Online' and 'Public Consultations' among English respondents; and, 'Consultations Canada', 'Consultations publiques', 'Consultations auprès des canadiens', and 'La parole au canadiens' among French respondents.
- When presented with potential options, most English panelists preferred 'Consulting with Canadians' and most French panelists preferred 'Consultations en direct'.
- The majority of respondents agreed that the layout of the Consulting Canadians Home page is easy to understand and they would know how to find a public consultation of interest.
- When presented with the FAQ section of the Consulting Canadians Web site, the majority of panelists agreed that it is clear and easy to understand, it adequately answers the question they would have, and they would keep the range of questions included on the page.

### **Marketing and Take-Up**

- The majority of English and French respondents preferred the URL Canada.ca. In terms of a second choice, English respondents selected Canada.gov.ca and French respondents selected Canada.gc.ca.
- Just over half of respondents thought the GoC should advertise a single Web site URL because it is easier to find and use and it is easier to remember one URL. Another one-third thought the GoC should advertise the Canada Site followed by specific topics when

advertising its Web site URL because it is easier to find and sue and information is in one location but specific to the information of interest.

- The majority of panelists thought the GoC should offer faster processing times rather than discounts or incentives to encourage more people to use online transactions. Although panelists supported both options.
- Other suggestions for the GoC to encourage more Canadians to use its on-line service and information were to advertise it, ensure it is easy to use and access, promote faster service / turnaround time, not charge for the service, have contests / draws, and promote the ability to access additional information online.

### **Privacy / Security and On-Line Transactions**

- There was moderate concern with providing certain types of personal or confidential information to the GoC over the Internet. Panelists were comfortable providing their address, telephone number, and birth date but were less comfortable providing a line from a previous tax return, income, social insurance number, and credit card number.
- While the majority of panelists trusted the GoC to keep their personal information safe, there was concern among some panelist. Close to three-quarters of panelists trusted the Government completely and over two-thirds had moderate or strong concerns.
- Findings indicate that privacy and security concerns are likely to have a meaningful impact on the take-up of new personalized on-line government services. This is particularly true for Household Internet panel users.
- The inclusion of privacy statements or seals on sites that conduct secure transactions would have the largest impact in increasing panelists' confidence in using GoC Web sites, followed by statistics on how many Canadians are using government sites to conduct secure transactions.
- Other reasons panelists may not use these new personalized on-line services included concerns about hackers / identity theft, data sharing between departments and agencies, and it may be too confusing / hard to use.

### **Accessing Provincial / Municipal Information through the Canada Site**

- Panelists showed interest in being able to link to Provincial and Municipal information and services from the Canada site. There is a stronger interest in being able to access Provincial versus Municipal information.

### **Canada International Gateway**

- Less than half of respondents indicated that they had provided information to family or friends permanently residing outside Canada. Of those who had, the majority had provided information related to visiting Canada, immigrating to Canada, working in Canada, and studying in Canada.
- The most popular sources used to access information for international audiences included GoC Web sites, panelists' own personal experience, provincial / municipal Web sites, and Government of Canada departments / agencies.
- The most commonly accessed GoC Web sites used for information for international audiences included the Canada Site and Citizenship and Immigration. Less than one-quarter had accessed Canada International / Non-Canadians Gateway.
- The most commonly contacted Government of Canada departments or agencies to access information for international audiences included Citizenship and Immigration,

followed by Human Resources and Skills Development and an embassy or high commission.

- The majority of panelists stated it was important for the Government of Canada to actively promote Canada International to international audiences.

### **Employee Only Section of the Canada Site**

- Panelists' reactions were mixed to the inclusion of an employee only section on the Canada Site. One-third stated there should not be an employee only section while just fewer than one-half stated they had no problem with it, particularly Federal Government employees.

### **Essential Skills Equalizer**

- While the majority of respondents thought that the essential skills equalizer was a good idea, the tool would only prompt exactly half of panelists to use the tool for themselves and less than half to use it with, or on behalf of, someone else.

### **We've Gone Mobile**

- Only 17% of respondents indicated that they access the Internet from a wireless device.
- The title 'We've Gone Mobile' was considered interesting enough to encourage about half of respondents to click on it.
- After reviewing what was available through the site, the majority of panelists indicated the title 'We've Gone Mobile' gives a clear idea of what the link leads to.
- The top 4 alternate names suggested by panelists for the 'We've Gone Mobile' Web site were 'Wireless Access', 'Mobile Access', 'Wireless Services', and 'Wireless Government'.
- When asked to rank potential alternate names for the 'We've Gone Mobile' Web site, the majority of panelists preferred the title 'Wireless Access'.
- Just over half of all panelists thought the content on the 'We've Gone Mobile' page was useful to them personally.

### **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:

- **Continue to support the GOL initiative.** The perceived benefits of the GOL initiative continue to increase. Strongest gains were related to providing good value for tax dollars, resulting in faster service and improving the quality of government service.
- **Undertake / continue with validated initiatives that provide inter-jurisdictional information on-line.** Almost 80% stated they would be interested in being able to link to provincial information from the Canada Site and 69% indicated an interest in linking to municipal information. In fact, when presented with a clear scenario from the Public Safety Portal support was very strong. In this case between 69% to 83% of respondents stated it was important for the Portal to provide a link to local contact information for 10 of the 13 topics tested in this research.

- **Undertake steps, where applicable, to understand why awareness of some on-line services is relatively strong, but access is comparatively low.** The research was used to test awareness and access of a range of government on-line services. In some cases low use may simply be due to level of interest or applicability. However, there are some areas of general interest / applicability where awareness is strong and online access is low. If there is not a good understanding of why this is occurring, steps should be taken to develop this understanding.
- **In order to increase take-up of some services they must be promoted.** For example, only 31% of panelists were aware of their ability to participate in public consultation on GoC Web sites. If Canadians are going to participate in this process they must be aware of how to do so.
- **If there are initiatives to promote the personal benefits of government on-line services, convenience (i.e. available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week) and 'saves time' are key benefits to emphasize among those tested in this research.** In future testing it would be useful to assess the value of messaging related other features such as 'good value for tax dollars' and 'faster service' i.e. improved turn-around time.
- **Consider the range of impacts if it is decided to change the Canada Site URL.** Respondents indicated a preference for Canada.ca or Canada.gov.ca over the current URL – Canada.gc.ca for the name of the Government of Canada site. However, the current URL is familiar to some users and the impact of a change should be assessed prior to proceeding.
- **Explore the use of a single URL when advertising GoC Web site addresses.** The research clearly indicates that respondents prefer an approach that features a main GoC site. Half preferred the use of simply one URL and another 40% supported the use of a single URL followed by a specific topic. In contrast, there was little support for the use of different URLs for each main service.
- **Consider the use of faster processing time guarantees to encourage more people to use government on-line transactions** as 85% of respondents agreed with this option. However, the impact of this guarantee on take-up should be established prior to proceeding.
- **Do not offer incentives or financial discounts to users of on-line services.** One third of respondents disagreed with this option so we would not recommend the use of this approach at this point in time. It is important to note that when asked for other ways to encourage trial and use of GoC on-line services several respondents emphasized the need to 'promote' these services.
- **Feature privacy statements and seals on sites that conduct secure transactions and use statistics of how many Canadians are using government sites to conduct secure transactions.** The results indicate that privacy and security are likely to have a meaningful impact on the take-up of new personalized government services.
- **Continue to ensure GoC services are well placed on Internet search engines in order to increase penetration among light and non-users of GoC online services.** Although the use of Internet search engines to access government services is declining (i.e. a decline of 8% between Survey 3 and Survey 5), it was still used by one fifth of the panelists for their last visit. Of most relevance is the fact that its use was more prevalent among non-users and late adopters of GOL and beginner Internet users.

- **Continue with the practice of periodically conducting usability testing on individual sites.** Although there is a decrease in the percentage of respondents reporting that they encountered some difficulty in their recent visit, almost half of those reporting difficulties are experiencing navigation or usability issues.
- **Do not include an employee only section that is password protected on the Canada Site as 41% of respondents did not support this addition.**