

# MRIA CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MARKET AND SOCIAL RESEARCH

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## APPENDIX "L"

### The Common Standards of Disclosure & Member Declaration for the Issuance of Survey Research into the Canadian Marketplace

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## The Common Standards of Disclosure

### Introduction

Members of Marketing Research and Intelligence Association (MRIA) are subject to professional and ethical requirements via MRIA's Code of Conduct (the “Code”) for Market and Social Research. These requirements include things such as accepted methodologies, professional protocols, conduct when interacting with respondents and other related technical elements and are regularly reviewed and updated. Adherence to the Code is essential to the integrity of the market and opinion research industry and are the fundamental criteria for being a member of the MRIA.

The release of survey/market and opinion research in the public domain (*in the public domain is defined as able to be discussed and examined freely by the general public- Collins English Dictionary –Completed & unabridged 2012 Digital Edition*)—generally referred to as “polling”—by the MRIA members automatically inherits the MRIA's Code of Conduct for Market and Social Research. The public is owed integrity, transparent accountability, and a standard of disclosure from researchers and their agencies. This is what the MRIA Common Standards on Polling and the Declaration addresses in this Appendix. These MRIA requirements are in addition to The Canada Elections Act or other applicable regulations.

This document will use the pronouns I, YOU, WE, OUR, and MY, in reference to individual members, or the individual members and their employers who are corporations. The pronoun in the plural may apply to the singular and the pronoun in the singular may apply to the plural depending on the reference and the context of membership.

### The Member Declaration

The dissemination of market and opinion research into the public domain carries with it the potential of great consequence, especially when politics and policy are concerned. Because of this, the Common Standard of Disclosure carries with it the Member Declaration that is a critical addendum to the Code. The goals of the Common Standard of Disclosure and the Member Declaration are:

- I. to support sound and ethical practice in the conduct of survey and public opinion research;
- II. to ensure unbiased research for decision-making in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors,
- III. to improve public understanding of survey and public opinion research methods; and
- IV. the proper use of those research results, especially if they are released into the public domain.

We, the members of the MRIA, pledge ourselves to maintain the highest standards of scientific competence, integrity, and transparency in conducting, analyzing, and reporting our work; establishing and maintaining relations with survey respondents and our clients; and communicating with those who eventually use the research for decision-making purposes and the general public. We further pledge ourselves to reject all tasks or assignments that would require activities inconsistent with the principles of the MRIA Code and this declaration.

Whereas the Common Standards of Disclosure and the Declaration are a part of the MRIA Code, the following sections describe the obligations we believe all research professionals have, regardless of their

membership in this Association or any other, to uphold the credibility of the industry when releasing survey/market and public opinion research into the public domain. It shall not be the purpose of the MRIA to pass judgment on the merits of specific research methods. However, from time to time, the MRIA may issue guidelines and recommendations on best practices with regard to the design, conduct, and reporting of surveys and other forms of market and public opinion research. Any changes to the MRIA Code are reviewed and voted on by the board of directors as outlined in the bylaws.

## I. Principles of Professional Responsibility in Our Dealings with People

### A. Research with Participants

- I. We will avoid practices or methods that may harm, endanger, humiliate, or mislead participants and potential participants.
- II. We will not misrepresent our research or conduct other activities (such as sales, fundraising, or political campaigning) under the guise of conducting research.
- III. We recognize that participation in our research is voluntary except where specified by regulation, policy, or law. Active participants have the right to make a free and informed decision to provide all, some or none of the information we request, without coercion, and to decline after initial agreement.
- IV. We recognize the right of potential participants to be provided with a description of our research sufficient to permit them to make a free and informed decision about their participation. Such a description includes the clear identification and, if need be, a verification process for the name of the supplier collecting the research and any summary of the risk of harm or benefit from participation if applicable, and how their personally identifiable information will be used and protected.
- V. We will be truthful and responsive to questions from participants and potential participants and will make no false or misleading claims about the research.
- VI. We recognize the critical importance of protecting the rights of minors and other vulnerable individuals when obtaining participation decisions and conducting our research.
- VII. We will act in accordance with Canadian laws, regulations, and data owners' (providers of research or administrative records previously collected for other purposes) rules governing the collection, use, and disclosure of information obtained from or about individuals, groups, or organizations.

## B. Research Involving Personally Identifiable Information

- I. We recognize the right of active participants to be provided with information about how personally identifiable information that we collect from them will be used.
- II. We recognize the importance of preventing unintended disclosure of personally identifiable information. We will act in accordance with all relevant best practices, laws, regulations, and data owner rules governing the handling and storage of such information.
- III. We will restrict access to identifiers and destroy them as soon as they are no longer required, in accordance with relevant laws, regulations, and data owner rules.
- IV. We will not disclose any information that could be used, alone or in combination with other reasonably available information, to identify participants with their data, without participant permission.
- V. When disclosing personally identifiable data for purposes other than the current research, we will relay to data users any conditions of their use specified in the participant permission we have obtained.
- VI. We understand that the use of our research results in a legal proceeding does not relieve us of our ethical obligation to protect participant privacy and keep confidential all personally identifiable data, except where participants have permitted disclosure.

## C. Clients or Sponsors

- I. When undertaking work for a client, we will hold confidential all proprietary information obtained about the client and about the conduct and findings of the research undertaken for the client, except when the client expressly authorizes the dissemination of the information.
- II. We will inform those for whom we conduct publicly released research studies about MRIA Code and the Common Standard of Disclosure (Section III), and provide information on what should be disclosed in their releases.
- III. We will be mindful of the limitations of our expertise and capacity to conduct various types of research and will accept only those research assignments that we can reasonably expect to accomplish within these limitations.

## D. The Public

- I. We will disclose to the public the methods and procedures used to obtain our own publicly disseminated research results in accordance with MRIA Code and Section III of this declaration.

- II. We will correct any errors in our own work that come to our attention which could influence the interpretation of the results, disseminating such corrections to all original recipients of our content.
- III. We will correct factual misrepresentations or distortions of data or analysis, including those made by our research partners, co-investigators, sponsors, or clients. We will make good faith efforts to issue corrective statements to all parties who were presented with the factual misrepresentations or distortions, and if such factual misrepresentations or distortions were made publicly, we would correct them in a public forum to the best of our ability that is as similar as possible.
- IV. We recognize that differences of opinion in the interpretation of analysis are not necessarily factual misrepresentations or distortions and will exercise professional judgment in handling disclosure of such differences of opinion.

## E. The Profession

- I. We recognize the importance of the science of public opinion and survey research to disseminate as freely as practicable the ideas and findings that emerge from our research.
- II. We can point with pride to our membership in the MRIA and adherence to the MRIA Code which contains this section as evidence of our commitment to high standard of ethics in our relations with research participants, our clients or sponsors, the public, and the profession.

## II. Principles of Professional Practice in the Conduct of Our Work

- I. We will exercise due care in developing research designs, samples, and instruments, and in collecting, processing, and analyzing data, taking all reasonable steps to assure the reliability and validity of results.
- II. We will recommend and employ only those tools and methods of analysis that, in our professional judgment, are fit for the research questions.
- III. We will not knowingly select research tools and methods of analysis that yield misleading conclusions.
- IV. We will not knowingly make interpretations of research results that are inconsistent with the data available, nor will we tacitly permit such interpretations. We will ensure that any findings we report, either privately or for public release, are a balanced and accurate portrayal of research results.
- V. We will not knowingly imply that interpretations should be accorded greater confidence than the data actually warrant. When we generalize from samples to make statements about

populations, we will only make claims of precision and applicability to broader populations that are warranted by the sampling frames and other methods employed.

- VI. We will not engage in data fabrication or falsification.
- VII. We will accurately describe and attribute research from other sources that we cite in our work, in terms of its methodology, content, comparability, and source.
- VIII. We will describe our methods and findings accurately and in appropriate detail in all research reports, adhering to the **Common Standard of Disclosure** specified in Section III of this document.

### III. The Common Standards of Disclosure

The ability of survey/market and public opinion researchers to share their work with the Canadian public is a privilege. Privileges like this come with responsibilities. That's because this work when released can have a significant impact on our lives and institutions. They can influence an issue or event and how the media covers it, how stakeholders, governments, and businesses react to it and how the public understands it. Good professional practice imposes a crucial obligation on all survey researchers who release public opinion findings or data into the public domain to disclose sufficient information about how the research was conducted to allow for independent review and peer verification of the research claims.

The MRIA puts the onus on the individual *and* the company to comply with this responsibility, and each is singularly responsible for their respective action and failure to act. Also, where an individual represents a corporation, the individual, and the corporation are singularly and jointly responsible. All parties involved in any infraction of the MRIA Code and, in particular, this section of the Code, by commission or omission, will be held responsible because accountability is the cornerstone of every trusted structure.

#### Disclosure Requirements

- A. We will disclose the methods and procedures used to obtain any report of the research report and/or results released into the public domain.
- B. We will inform those for who wish to conduct research studies to be released into the public domain, including its use in whole or in part for advertising or other public displays, about Code of Conduct and my professional obligations in this regard.
- C. We will disclose the following in a common, readily accessible format and make available to all when a report, results, or both are released:
  - I. Who sponsored the survey and who conducted it. If different from the sponsor, the sources of funding will also be disclosed.

- II. The exact wording and presentation of questions and response options whose results are reported. These can be reported separately or on the data tables. This includes any preceding interviewer or respondent instructions and any preceding questions that might reasonably be expected to influence responses to the reported results.
  - III. A definition of the population under study.
  - IV. The dates data were collected.
  - V. The methods used to recruit the panel or participants and if the sample was drawn from a pre-recruited panel or pool of respondents.
  - VI. A description of the sample design, giving a clear indication of the method by which the respondents were selected, recruited, intercepted or otherwise contacted or encountered, along with any eligibility requirements and/or oversampling. The description of the sampling frame and sample design will include sufficient detail to determine whether the respondents were selected using probability or non-probability methods.
  - VII. Whether weighting/calibration/normalization was used to adjust the results and the impact of the procedure on the data as measured through a weighting efficiency calculation and/or disclosure of the range (i.e., min and max) and variance of weights.
  - VIII. A statistic that expresses the amount of sampling error in a survey's results—such as a margin of error or a Bayesian credibility interval—if scientifically applicable.
  - IX. The Method(s) and mode(s) used to administer the survey (e.g., CATI, CAPI, ACASI, IVR, mail survey, Web survey) and the language(s) offered.
  - X. The detailed tables or representations thereof with both weighted and unweighted data and standard demographic and socio-economic indicators. It is especially important that the weighted and unweighted results for “vote” findings be provided.
  - XI. An e-mail address for further enquiries. All other reasonable requests for data necessary for readers of the polls to assess the validity of the data will be answered.
  - XII. A clear URL on the release to the MRIA website which links to the Common Standards of Disclosure and Member Declaration.
- D. I will make these materials available for scrutiny as close to the release of the findings into the public domain as possible preferably within 2.5 hours of release and no later than 48 hours after release. Posting these materials to a website is optimum and expected in this day of modern technology. Access to releases dealing with a vote or public/political issues should be made readily accessible without a paywall or subscription requirement.

- E. I will correct any error in my work that is brought to my attention which could influence the interpretation of the results, disseminating such corrections to all original recipients of the content.
- F. Wherever possible, I will correct any factual misrepresentations or distortions of data or analysis, including those made by research partners, co-investigators, sponsors or clients that are brought to my attention.
- G. I understand that if any of my work becomes the subject of a formal review of an alleged violation of the MRIA Code which contains this section by the MRIA or its designate, I will cooperate. The MRIA may ask for additional information, including the data set, on the study in such detail that a fellow researcher would be able to conduct a professional evaluation of the study and/or the process of such a release of that study into the public domain. The MRIA will only deal with those allegations of merit and will not act as a forum to settle scores between stakeholders and other parties who choose to use the review process as a tactic for their own outcome.

## The MRIA Member Common Standards of Disclosure Declaration

The **Common Standards of Disclosure Member Declaration** (“**the Declaration**”) is based on the **MRIA Code** and is required of all who wish to be and are members of the Association. Membership in MRIA is open to any individual, corporation or entity who has a role in the creation, study or dissemination of public opinion research. Members who create survey/market and public opinion research must adhere to this declaration; members in associated fields, such as academia and media, are expected to recognize those who adhere to this standard and to promote its necessity. The completion of the following **Declaration** is the gateway to full membership with its accordant rights and privileges including the use of the phrase “***we are members of the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association***” on every survey publication.

**I HEREBY DECLARE** that as a Member of **the MRIA** I will follow the **Code of Conduct**, which includes the **Common Standards of Disclosure** to the best of my ability. I will maintain the highest standard of scientific competence, integrity, accountability, and transparency in designing, conducting, analyzing and reporting my work, especially if and when it is released into the public domain. I understand that if as the result of a formal review by the **MRIA** or its designate of an alleged violation of this Declaration, I am subject to an action of advice, warning, censure or termination of my membership by **the MRIA**, and the fact of such action being taken may be communicated to the public by **the MRIA**. I also agree to have my name, and professional title listed publicly on the **MRIA** site as a member in good standing. The Professional Code of Conduct which includes the Common Standards of Disclosure and the Member Declaration can be amended by the board of directors or member vote at the regular Annual Meeting of the MRIA/ARIM.