MRIA CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MARKET AND SOCIAL RESEARCH

APPENDIX "L"
Polling Standards
For the Canadian Marketplace

These Standards were created by the Standards committee using the following sources:

The ESOMAR/WAPOR Guideline on Opinion Polls and Published Surveys research; American Association for Public Opinion Research; consultation with Canadian pollsters; papers and news articles on polling; CRTC regulations and the Canada Elections Act

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POLLING STANDARDS – APPENDIX "L" – MRIA CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MARKET AND SOCIAL RESEARCH

1 INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

The MRIA Polling Standards apply to all instances where public opinion surveys are conducted.

Public opinion polls and surveys are regularly conducted to measure not only support for political parties and candidates, but also public opinion on a wide range of social and political issues. The results are published frequently in the print, online and broadcast media, and also through Social Media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter).

Properly conducted and disseminated opinion polls and surveys use scientific statistical methods to provide the public, politicians, the media and other interested groups with access to accurate and objective measures of public behaviour, attitudes and intentions. They give the general public an opportunity for its voice to be heard and to receive feedback about the opinions of their fellow-citizens. They also help guide policy by giving decision-makers impartial and unbiased information about what the public wants.

Opinion polls are subject to exactly the same professional and ethical requirements as other forms of market and social research, set out in the MRIA's Code of Conduct for Market and Social Research to which researchers and research users must conform. The Code sets minimum standards of professional and ethical conduct.

This document highlights the responsibilities of researchers to conduct opinion polls in a professional and ethical way, and report them with sufficient transparency so that the public can judge the validity and reliability of the results. Both will help ensure public confidence in opinion polls and published surveys.

This standards document:

- Sets out the ethical rules that opinion researchers must follow.
- Underlines the rights and safeguards to which participants are entitled.
- Highlights the key information that must be made available to maintain transparency when results are published.
- Specifies standards to guide the agreements to be in place with those who commission polls to ensure published survey results are presented in an unbiased way.
- Highlights the core methodological principles that apply in the design and conduct of such research.
- Underlines some of the additional issues that arise with specific forms of opinion polls.
- Includes federal regulations that all researchers must adhere to, including the Canada Elections Act and the CRTC.

Throughout this document the word "must" is used to identify mandatory requirements that all MRIA members must adhere to, to be compliant with the MRIA Polling Standards.

2 DEFINITIONS

Opinion polls and opinion surveys include all systematic gathering, aggregating and interpretation of information about policy, electoral and other preferences and behaviours of individuals or organizations using the statistical and analytical methods and techniques of the applied social sciences in order to gain insight and support decision-making. In opinion research, as in all market research, the identity of respondents will not be revealed without explicit consent and no sales approach, or attempt to influence their opinion following the interview, will be made to respondents as a direct result of their having provided information.

Researcher is defined as any individual, institute or organization carrying out, or acting as a consultant on, an opinion poll or research project.

Research client is defined as any individual or organization that requests, commissions, sponsors or subscribes to all or any part of an opinion poll or research project. This can include a media organization or a political group, as well as those who have purchased content on an omnibus survey.

Respondent is defined as any individual or organization from which information is requested and/or collected for the purposes of an opinion poll or research project.

Interview is defined as any form of contact with a respondent in order to collect information for opinion research purposes.

Pre-election polls are conducted at any point prior to an election and include questions about voting intention.

Survey report is defined as the presentation of polling data, either in tabular form or as an analysis, meant for public consumption in news media, online, or in other public distribution.

Exit polls are conducted to measure how people voted and are usually conducted outside polling stations.

Access panel is defined as a database of potential research participants who declare that they will cooperate with future data collection requests if selected.

3 SPECIAL CHALLENGES WITH PUBLIC OPINION POLLS

An opinion poll may be designed to measure the views of a specific population or group – for example a country's electorate (for most political polls) or parents or trade union members. Opinion polls may deal with complex and sensitive issues about which respondents have varying degrees of knowledge and interest, and where their views may be half-formed, inconsistent and subject to change.

- Scientific opinion polls **must** not be confused with phone-in polls or other self-selecting surveys, including those that may be open to anyone who visits a particular website, attracting people who feel passionately about the subject of the poll, but do not constitute a representative sample.
- Pre-election polls make up only a minority of published surveys. They are however, a very public test of sampling theory and survey research in action. Polls have a good track record for accuracy but the occasional poll which appears to be wrong gets extensive media coverage with a very negative impact on the image of opinion polls and surveys and opinion research in general.
- Exit polls (interviewing voters as they leave the polling station) are even more likely to be seen as prediction polls and the analysis of their results is often used to explain why the election came out the way it did.
- While special care **must** be taken by researchers to ensure that results are accurately and fairly reported, clients and journalists also have a key role to play. The published data or survey report is often the only exposure the public has to polling results – and to market research in general.
- To report poll results well, journalists require a sufficient level of knowledge about opinion polls and methodologies to understand why some poll results need to be treated with caution because of timing, small sample sizes, low response rates, biased question wording or coverage.
- The MRIA takes seriously the need for public education in this area and is committed to helping educate journalists on the proper use of opinion polls. The MRIA will take steps to ensure that the finalized polling standards are communicated to journalists and will work with the Canadian Press to ensure that relevant standards appear in the Canadian Press' Stylebook (the official industry guidelines for the media).

Researchers have a responsibility to ensure that both clients and the public have a reasonable understanding of the special challenges in measuring attitudes and beliefs as distinct from behaviour.

It is therefore important that key information is published alongside a poll or survey report to ensure professional and transparent reporting so the audience has the opportunity to judge the evidence presented and decide whether or not it agrees with the conclusions drawn from the research.

4 RELATIONSHIP WITH PARTICIPANTS

4.1 Honesty

Market, social and opinion research **must** be clearly distinguished and separated from non-research activities (see Article 1 of the MRIA Code of Conduct for Market and Social Research).

This means that:

- Activities like political telemarketing, and any enquiry whose primary purpose is to obtain personally identifiable information about individuals for compiling or updating lists, obtaining names for sales, advertising, fundraising or other promotional approaches **must** not be represented as opinion research.

- Researchers **must** not attempt to sell anything (sugging) or raise money (frugging) in the course of conducting a poll or survey.
- Researchers **must** not engage in negative campaigning that is disguised as a political poll, such as push polling, which aims to persuade large numbers of voters and affect election outcomes. It does not measure opinions.

4.2 Professional responsibility and transparency

Respondents' cooperation is voluntary and they **must** not be misled when being asked for their cooperation. This means that:

- Interviewers **must** not make statements or promises that they know or believe to be incorrect in order to secure the co-operation of respondents or others.
- Researchers **must** take all reasonable precautions to ensure that respondents are in no way harmed or adversely affected as a direct result of their participation in an opinion poll or research
- Researchers should ensure they contact potential respondents at appropriate times. (See rules for conducting telephone polls in section 8.4.2)
- Researchers are required to promptly identify themselves and unambiguously state the purpose of the research and enable respondents to check their identity and bona fides
- Researchers **must** register their research project with the MRIA's Research Verification Service to allow the public to verify the legitimacy of the project.

4.3 Data protection and privacy

- Researchers **must** respect the principles of data protection and privacy as detailed in Article 7 – Data Protection and Privacy of the MRIA Code of Conduct for Market and Social Research.

5 RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GENERAL PUBLIC

5.1 Maintaining public confidence

Researchers **must not** act in a way that could bring discredit on the profession or lead to a loss of public confidence in it. Opinion polling depends on the public's willingness to participate and public confidence in the accuracy and reliability of opinion polls and published surveys. This means that researchers **must**:

- Use appropriate methods, and be transparent about sampling, the variables used for weighting, question wording and timing of the opinion poll.
- Follow the professional and mandatory disclosure requirements outlined in Section 5.2.
- Make legitimate comparisons between surveys.
- Not make claims which exceed the limits of the appropriate scientific principles on which opinion polling is based, such as claims about subgroups with sample sizes too small for statistical reliability.

5.2 Mandatory disclosure requirements for publishing results (the detailed technical information)

Disclosure requirements matter because as opinion polls have grown in number and variety, decision-makers, journalists and the public need to be able to differentiate between professional and unprofessional polls, to use them as appropriate information when evaluating public attitudes.

When opinion poll results are released by the researcher by press release, or are published in the media, researchers **must** keep their interpretations and statements fully consistent with the data. Limitations and weaknesses in the poll design, its execution, and the results **must** be noted in all reports and analyses.

Researchers who conduct public opinion polls and publicly release the survey results **must** make available the following mandatory disclosures about their research to allow the public, and the MRIA, ensure that the research is reliable and valid. This information **must** be available at the same time the survey results are released:

This information has to be available in one of two ways:

- Posted on the researcher's website

- A document containing the information that is available immediately upon request by any member of the public, media and the MRIA.

A "public" release of opinion survey results includes news releases, online mentions, social media postings, television or radio appearances, and comments made to print and online news media.

<u>The mandatory disclosures requirements for all public opinion surveys are as follows:</u>

- **The names of the organization which conducted the poll and its sponsor,** the organization(s) or person(s) who paid for the poll. If internal campaign polls are made public, it **<u>must</u>** be indicated that the data originally were collected for a political entity.
- **The universe effectively represented (i.e. who was interviewed),** whether the poll sample included all adults or only eligible or likely voters, the geographic range of the poll (province, electoral district, city) and whether certain groups were excluded from the design (those without landline telephones or internet access, for example). If possible, the estimated size of non-covered segments will be provided. If a size estimate cannot be provided, this will be explained.
- **The actual sample size (number of completed interviews included in the reported findings) and the geographical coverage.** For in-person interviewing, the number of sampling units **<u>must</u>** be included.
- **The dates of fieldwork**.
- **The sampling method used.** For quota samples and other non-probability samples, provide the characteristics by which the sample was selected. For probability samples, additional information, including the response rate, **<u>must</u>** be provided on request.(To calculate the response rate see section 8.2.4)
- **The method by which the poll was conducted (in-person, telephone interview (live interviewer or IVR), internet access panel, mixed mode etc.).**
- **If the poll was conducted using an internet access panel, and if the recruitment method to build the panel is based on multiple sources**
- **The number of call-backs for telephone interviews, IVR or live interviewer/CATI.**
- **Details of any strategies used to help gain cooperation** (e.g., advance contact, compensation or incentives, refusal conversion contacts) whether for participation in a group, panel or access panel or for participation in a particular research project.
- **Whether weighting was used to adjust the results and the general demographic or behavioural characteristics used for the weights**. For example, if respondent distributions were adjusted to reflect known census population characteristics or known voting distributions from previous elections, or if adjustments to the unweighted poll findings are made, this should be noted in the publication of the poll findings. The general weighting variables should be described but proprietary algorithms and specific weighting variables do not need to be disclosed.
- **The weighted and unweighted results presented in data tables, and an explanation if there are any significant differences. The data tables must include base numbers and percentages**
- **The percentages of respondents who give 'don't know' answers (and in the case of voting-intention studies, of those who say they will not vote).** This information **<u>must</u>** always be given when it is likely to affect significantly the interpretation of the findings. When comparing findings from different surveys, any changes (other than minor ones) in these percentages **<u>must</u>** be indicated. There are many occasions on which the interpretation of particular findings will be quite different if the level of 'don't know' answers is 5% or 50%. In the case of voting-intention studies the same consideration also applies to 'will not vote' answers
- **The full disposition including the survey qualification questions.** This is to demonstrate that the sample does not include respondents that may bias the results (e.g. media, individuals who work in marketing research, etc.)
- **The questions asked, and the results for each question**. The questions results **<u>must</u>** be presented in the same order they were asked in the survey.
    - A general indication of the placement of a key question and its context should be provided if it follows other questions that may impact on the way that question is understood by respondents.
- **In data tables, the full question wording must be included.**

- **When the questions are part of a more extensive or omnibus survey, this must be clearly indicated,** including a general indication of the placement of the questions in the questionnaire.
- **Any relevant stimuli, such as visual or sensory exhibits or show cards that were used**. In the case of surveys conducted via self-administered computer- assisted interviewing, providing the relevant screen shot(s) is optimal, though not required.

Recommended disclosure

- The "likely voter" model, if used, and the details of the model

Researchers **must** ensure that all communications of opinion survey results indicate that the mandatory disclosures are available either on their website and or upon request.

5.3 Media and Polling

In preparing media reports (in print, online, television, radio, etc.), journalists and other users of the research connected with the media normally follow their own codes of practice and ethics, many of which require adequate disclosure of polling information.

The MRIA Polling Standards are not intended in any way to substitute for media codes of practices, but rather to support them. Press releases should, at a minimum, include the name of the sponsor of the poll, the timing of the interview, the interview method, and the sample size. Researchers should be prepared to provide all the mandatory disclosure requirements to allow the media to assess the validity and reliability of the poll.

However, researchers are **encouraged** to strongly suggest to all media organizations (whether it is print, online, television or radio) that they provide the link to the detailed technical information (mandatory disclosure requirements) on the media organization's website, and include a link the researcher's website at the bottom of all articles or commentary (columns) pieces.

5.4 Secondary reporting

Research organization normally cannot be held responsible for any secondary reporting or subsequent use made of opinion poll results by people other than the original client, however researchers are **encouraged** to monitor how their research is being reported.

Researchers should be ready to immediately issue comments or information as may be necessary to correct any cases of misreporting or misuse of results when these are brought to its attention. Researchers **must** immediately notify the MRIA Compliance Officer (by email

5.5 Additional researcher responsibilities

All researchers **must**:

- Immediately notify clients, or media, who have published the results, of any error(s) made by the researcher
- Notify the MRIA Compliance Officer (by email) if an individual or organization, is misreporting or misusing the results of a poll, and/or is reporting results without permission, and/or using polling results in a way they were not intended to be used (i.e. aggregators)
- Publish on their website the reasons for any "rogue" polls, or drastically different results between two polls they (the individual researcher) has conducted on the same subject (e.g. during elections)

6 RELATIONSHIP WITH CLIENTS AND OTHERS REPORTING RESEARCH

6.1 Responsibilities

To avoid possible misunderstandings, the research organization **must** make clear to its clients in advance of conducting research:

- That the research organization itself is bound by the requirements of the MRIA Code of Conduct for Market and Social Research.
- That subsequent wider publication of the research findings by the client is in accordance with the MRIA Code of Conduct for Market and Social Research, the MRIA Polling Standards, and the MRIA's Guideline on the Mutual Rights and Responsibilities of Researchers and Clients.
- That the research organization 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 dissemination of the information is expressly authorized by the client

Researchers **must** make a clear distinction between the results that emerge directly from the questions asked, and any commentary/interpretation based on the results.

When findings are published by the client, the client shall be asked to consult with the researcher as to the form and content of the findings. Both the researcher and the client have a responsibility to ensure the published results are not misleading. This means for example:

- Misleading comments based on non-significant differences and relationships **must** be avoided to ensure readers are not confused.
- Special care is required to ensure that any graphs or charts used do not convey a misleading impression of the current survey's results or of trends over time.
- The public **must** be able to clearly distinguish between the survey findings as such and any editorial or other comments based upon these findings.

When an organization conducts fieldwork for published surveys, but has not been involved in the analysis, it should be attentive to how the results are portrayed. That is especially the case when its name is included in the survey report. However, it has no responsibility if its name is not mentioned or when it has no control over how results are reported.

Researchers **must** always be prepared to make available to clients and the public the technical information necessary to assess the validity of any findings (see Section 5.2 above). Furthermore, researchers **must** not allow their name to be associated with the dissemination of the conclusions from a market research project unless they are adequately supported by the data.

This means that the researcher **must** reserve the right to publish the total study and not just the technical specifications in the event of:

- a shortened version of the publication distorting the analysis of the results;
- an unforeseen and abridged version of the publication; and
- a publication which does not conform to the prior agreements.

In the event that a client releases data from a survey that was not originally intended for publication, the MRIA Polling Standards will apply as if the research had originally been commissioned for publication.

6.2 Contractual agreements

Contracts between research organizations and their clients **must** adhere to the MRIA Guideline on the Mutual Rights and Responsibilities of Researchers and Clients, and any applicable sections of the MRIA Code of Conduct).

In addition to any other requirements it is suggested that contracts should cover:

- Clarification of the point that the contract binds both the client as survey sponsor and the media commissioning the survey, where these are different parties.
- Some measure of control by the researcher over the published form of the results including figures and graphs.

Certain contracts also provide that if research findings commissioned for publication are not published, such findings can subsequently (after a specified period of time) be released by the research organization itself; or alternatively the researcher is free to repeat the survey for another client/research user.

7 METHODOLOGICAL QUALITY AND TRANSPARENCY

The two main characteristics of quantitative scientific surveys are that respondents are chosen according to explicit statistical sampling criteria to ensure representativeness, rather than being self-selected, and that questions are worded in a balanced way.

Researchers **must** therefore:

- Make clear whether a probability or a quota or other non-probability sample is used.
- Allow the client on request to arrange for checks on the quality of data collection and data preparation (see Article 4c of the MRIA Code of Conduct for Market and Social Research).
- Provide the client and research users with procedures undertaken to ensure data quality. Where applicable this includes: re-contacts to confirm that the interview occurred and/or to verify the respondent's identity, measures taken to prevent respondents from completing the same survey more than once, and other quality control procedures (e.g., logic checks and tests for speeding and patterning). If no such efforts were undertaken, this will be disclosed
- Pay attention to the timing of the fieldwork, interviewer training (if applicable), the size and method of sample selection and weighting of results.
- Make available all mandatory disclosures listed in Section 5.2

7.1 Margin of Error

The MRIA recognizes that the marketing research industry is changing and the notion of the margin of error, and what modes of research are considered probability samples, is evolving.

The MRIA DOES NOT consider online polls to be probability samples.

As per Appendix D – Scientific Integrity of the MRIA Code, the following is the current **guideline** for reporting a margin of error:

> **Integrity of Reporting**
>
> Section b)
>
> […]
>
> "Researchers must not present research results with greater confidence than the data warrants. Instead, as responsible professionals, members must point out the relevant limitations of the research. This includes but is not limited to the following guidelines:
>
> > i. Disclosing relevant potential sources of error, both sampling and non-sampling (e.g. response, non-response, measurement, coverage, etc.).
> >
> > ii. Being explicit about the assumptions made about data accuracy when employing quota or stratification methods with probability samples.
> >
> > iii. Refraining from making unqualified statements about confidence intervals or margins of sampling error on population estimates when probability samples are not used. For example, panels of repeat volunteers will not ordinarily qualify as sources of probability samples of the general population."

8 ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR SPECIFIC TYPES OF OPINION POLLS AND PUBLISHED SURVEYS

8.1 Pre-election and voting intention polls

Pre-election polls should not be seen as predictions per se. They are instead a reflection of opinion at the time the poll was conducted. Researchers **must** recognize that new events and information may still change voter preference and **must** state if there is any evidence that respondents favouring one party or candidate may be unwilling to indicate their true preference or unwilling to participate in the poll. People do change their mind, some even in the second before marking their vote on the ballot slip and "undecided" voters can have a decisive impact on the result.

Pre-election polls need particular care in noting the timing of interviews (how long before an election the poll was taken), the sample from which results are being reported (all adults, those eligible to vote, those who are deemed most likely to vote), and how likely voters have been determined.

As good practice in conducting pre-election polls, researchers should:

- Observe the need for samples of appropriate size and quality and technical considerations particularly affecting pre-election polls. For example, such polls **must** have a sample large enough to draw conclusions about voters, who may be only a percentage of the total adult population (in some cases, the effective sample size may be reduced by as much as half). It is necessary to disclose the actual sample size on which the key vote preference findings are based.
- Measure key variables such as likelihood to vote and wherever possible, reasons for party choice or attitudes on issues or other aspects of the campaign. Such polls will have greater political and social value if they do not confine themselves only to measuring voting intention but also explore the reasons for party choice and opinions on important campaign issues.
- Check the demographic profile for representativeness and, if necessary, apply weighting to correctly represent the electorate. Ensure that the population profile that is reported is that of electors eligible to vote rather than the all adults profile normally used in commercial market research.
- Attempt to keep key elements of methodology consistent throughout the election campaign. This particularly applies to sampling method, question wording and the positioning of voting intention questions. It does not apply to sample size or composition; polls closer to the Election Day may rely on samples of “likely voters” rather than all eligible voters. However, if polls move to sample “likely” voters later in the campaign, this adjustment **must** be clearly noted and distinguished.
- In omnibus surveys, ensure that political questions are not affected by the subject matter of the preceding questions. That may mean placing such questions near the beginning of the poll. Political questions that might affect measurements of voting intention should not be placed before the vote question.
- Make available all mandatory disclosure requirements outlined in section 5.2.

The percentage of respondents that are “undecided,” “don’t know” or otherwise do not answer the vote question, should be published in all pre-election polls, along with percentages that say they will not vote.

8.2 Exit polls

Exit polls are mainly conducted on Election Day with voters interviewed as they leave polling stations about how they voted and why. They may be subject to laws about interviewer access (the distance from a polling place interviewers may stand), and about publication.

Because of the speed with which the results of Exit polls are formulated and disseminated, and the fact that they interview those who have already voted, they do predict election results. They also describe patterns of voter support for parties, candidates, and issues.

8.2.1 Respondent protections

- See article 7 – Data Protection and Privacy in the MRIA Code of Conduct for Market and Social Research.
- As exit poll interviewing is conducted in a public place, interviewers **must** take special care about respondent confidentiality. Asking voters to complete a pencil and paper form that is then placed in a box without interviewer intervention, or having voters complete the interview privately on a hand-held device is far preferable to an oral interview.

8.2.2 Study design

Researchers conducting exit polls **must** follow these principles:

- They **must** be impartial. Exit polls are designed to collect data from voters and report information on electoral outcomes – they are not tools for partisan advocacy.
- Use transparent, public and well-documented methods. It is also recommended that when the exit poll is used for analysis, the data set (without individual identifiers) along with appropriate survey documentation be deposited in public archives and/or on websites for general access.
- Adopt study designs that are suitable for producing accurate and reliable results and that follow accepted procedural and technical standards.
- Follow generally accepted good survey practice. In places where voting takes place by mail or even by internet, exit polls may be conducted on election day itself or in the days preceding the event by methods, like telephone

or online. If interviewing at a polling place is forbidden or dangerous, interviews may also be conducted on Election Day at homes or other sites where polling is normally conducted. Special care **must** be taken in those circumstances to ensure that respondents actually are voters.

8.2.3 Release of results

- Exit polls used for projections should be reported as soon as is practical after the polls close. Any delay in disseminating the results will raise questions about the legitimacy of the effort, especially with regard to estimating the outcome of the election. If analysis is the only purpose of the exit poll, prompt release is less important.
- See Section 9 for election results reporting regulations during "blackout" periods under the Canada Elections Act.

8.2.4 Accompanying information

In addition to the mandatory disclosure requirements in Section 5.2, the following information **must** also be available:

- Whether the sponsor of the exit poll has any ties to political parties, candidates, political organizations or governmental bodies;
- Number of polling stations or sampling points and how they were selected;
- The sampling frame and the sample's geographic dispersion and coverage;
- Any legal limits on data collection that might affect polling accuracy (e.g. minimum distance of interviewers from the polling station);
- Whether interviewing was conducted throughout the election day or for only part of the day and if people who have voted before election day have been included;
- Whether interviewers are part of a permanent field staff or hired for the occasion;
- Which results are based on parts of the sample, rather than the whole sample;
- A description of the precision of the findings, including estimates of sampling error;
- Monitoring and validation procedures (if any);
- Response rates (using one of the definitions in the AAPOR Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys) and item non-response on vote questions and any known non-response bias;
- General description of how estimates are made, the kinds of variables being used, and whether adjustments for non-response have been made and have known design effects.

8.3 Polls in times of crisis

Researchers who conduct opinion surveys in times of crisis **must** be sensitive to respondent concerns and ability to answer specific questions. They also **must** note whether there are any locations where interviewing may be problematic because of the crisis. This can include areas affected by natural disasters and those that have been the sites of military action, terrorist attacks, or other forms of violence. The requirement that no harm come to survey participants is particularly important in these circumstances.

8.4 Requirements for specific modes of data collection

8.4.1 In-person interviewing

In-person interviews are conducted using paper questionnaires or via computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI), where the questionnaire is stored on a laptop or iPad.

Researchers **must** ensure that:

- Interviewers are specially trained on how to conduct an interview – how to select respondents and gain their trust.
- Interviewers assure respondents that their participation is voluntary, and that their personal data and answers will remain confidential.
- Interviewers act properly, know the questionnaire, and are a neutral transmitter for the respondents' answers.

- Interviewers are adequately supervised, and incompetent or dishonest ones are removed from the interviewing team.

Researchers need to be aware of:

- Interviewer effects – the influence of the interviewer, their manner of behaviour during the interview, and even their appearance and gender - on the answers given by respondents.
- Interviewing in stressful electoral situations or on sensitive topics may impact respondents' willingness to answer accurately and this possibility **must** be taken into account when analysing and reporting results.
- If interviewing involves some type of quota selection, or the sample is drawn from a list, this information **must** be disclosed in poll reports as well as the number of sampling points (PSUs) and their geographic dispersion.

All mandatory disclosure requirements in Section 5.2 apply.

8.4.2 Telephone interviewing (Live Interviewer/CATI and IVR)

The MRIA has adopted the CRTC regulations for Automated Dialing-Announcing Devices[1] and the recommended "best practices" from the Ministry of Public Works and Government Services Canada (for public opinion polling data collection) for all telephone polls (live interviewer/CATI or IVR). This standard applies to public opinion polls AND any other type of research that uses IVR or live interviewers.

Researchers **must** take the following steps to minimize the level of intrusion:

- Begin each call "with a clear message identifying the person on whose behalf the telecommunication is made and a brief description of the purpose of the telecommunication. This identification message shall include:
    - An electronic mail address or postal mailing address and a local or toll-free telecommunications number at which a representative of the originator of the message can be reached.
        - In the event that the actual message relayed exceeds sixty (60) seconds, the identification message shall be repeated at the end of the telecommunication[2]
- Make no more than 8 calls to the same telephone number[3]. This number includes:
    - callbacks made to establish initial contact with the potential respondent (for instance, when there was no answer or the line was busy on previous calls); and
    - callbacks made after contact has been established (for instance, when the potential respondent asked for a callback at a more convenient time, or when the selected respondent was not home)
- Calls to prospective respondents may only be made between 9 a.m. and 9:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. [4]
- Researchers who want to reach a representative sample of the population **must** include mobile phones in their sampling frames. The specific proportion of interviews on mobile phones and the sample mix of landline and mobiles are dependent on the specific proportions of landline and mobile phones in Canada.
- However a sample is drawn, researchers **must** disclose any non-coverage.
- When incorporating mobile phones in a sample, researchers **must** follow the MRIA Guideline for Conducting Mobile Market Research
- If phone samples are used for polls, methods **must** be applied to correct for any under-representation of supporters of particular political parties. Simple demographic profile adjustments may not be adequate.

All mandatory disclosure requirements in Section 5.2 apply.

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[1] http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/trules-reglest.htm **Part IV: Automatic Dialing-Announcing Device (ADAD) Rules**

[2] http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/trules-reglest.htm **Part IV: Automatic Dialing-Announcing Device (ADAD) Rules, 4.d)**

[3] See http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/rop-por/rapports-reports/telephone/etape-stage-02-eng.html, section 2.1.3. "Using callbacks well is one of the most common and effective ways to increase response rates. **Under the current Standing Offer of the Government of Canada, eight callbacks are required before a sample record is retired.** This number includes callbacks made to establish initial contact with the potential respondent (for instance, when there was no answer or the line was busy on previous calls) *and* callbacks made after contact has been established (for instance, when the potential respondent asked for a callback at a more convenient time, or when the selected respondent was not home)."

[4] http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/trules-reglest.htm **Part IV: Automatic Dialing-Announcing Device (ADAD) Rules. 4.b)**

8.4.3 Online polls

Online polling's viability as a method of carrying out pre-election polls depends largely on the accessibility of a representative sample via the internet, or on the ability to construct a replica sample that reflects the population from what was originally a volunteer and often non-representative access panel.

- The MRIA DOES NOT consider online polls to be probability samples.
- Researchers using online methods to conduct a public opinion poll **must** follow the MRIA Guideline for Online Research – Appendix "I."
- All mandatory disclosure requirements in Section 5.2 apply.

8.4.4 Mixed modes

The use of multiple modes within a single poll is becoming common, especially as a way of ensuring coverage for groups that may be difficult to reach by the main polling method. For example, telephone interviews may be combined with online polls.

- The value of using multiple modes is their representativeness; however, researchers **must** always be aware of the possibilities of mode effects as different modes may produce different answers.
- When publishing results from polls using mixed modes, researchers **must** provide for each mode the mandatory disclosure requirements in Section 5.2

9 Canada Elections Act

The Canada Elections Act contains several regulations all researchers must be aware of and abide by – failure to do so could result in charges being laid under the Act.

There are mandatory disclosure requirements when reporting "election opinion surveys," and blackout periods. The MRIA's mandatory disclosure requirements continue to apply during elections.

The mandatory disclosure requirements are not limited to researchers. They apply to the *"first person who transmits the results of an election survey…to the public during an election period and any person who transmits them to the public within 24 hours after they are first transmitted to the public."* Researchers should be aware of this regulation and communicate it to media, or anyone else, who plans to publish poll results.

Below are the applicable sections of the Canada Elections Act that all researchers **must** be aware of[5]:

Transmission of election survey results

Section 326 (1) The first person who transmits the results of an election survey — other than a survey that is described in section 327 — to the public during an election period and any person who transmits them to the public within 24 hours after they are first transmitted to the public must provide the following together with the results:

(a) the name of the sponsor of the survey;

(b) the name of the person or organization that conducted the survey;

(c) the date on which or the period during which the survey was conducted;

(d) the population from which the sample of respondents was drawn;

(e) the number of people who were contacted to participate in the survey; and

(f) if applicable, the margin of error in respect of the data obtained.

Additional information — published surveys

(2) In addition to the information referred to in subsection (1), the following must be provided in the case of a transmission to the public by means other than broadcasting: (a) the wording of the survey questions in

[5] http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/e-2.01/

respect of which data is obtained; and (b) the means by which a report referred to in subsection (3) may be obtained.

Report on survey results

(3) A sponsor of an election survey shall, at any time during an election period after the results of the survey are transmitted to the public, provide, on request, a copy of a written report on the results of the survey, as transmitted under subsection (1). The report shall include the following, as applicable:

(a) the name and address of the sponsor of the survey;

(b) the name and address of the person or organization that conducted the survey;

(c) the date on which or the period during which the survey was conducted;

(d) information about the method used to collect the data from which the survey results are derived, including

(i) the sampling method,

(ii) the population from which the sample was drawn,

(iii) the size of the initial sample,

(iv) the number of individuals who were asked to participate in the survey and the numbers and respective percentages of them who participated in the survey, refused to participate in the survey, and were ineligible to participate in the survey,

(v) the dates and time of day of the interviews,

(vi) the method used to recalculate data to take into account in the survey the results of participants who expressed no opinion, were undecided or failed to respond to any or all of the survey questions, and

(vii) any weighting factors or normalization procedures used in deriving the results of the survey; and

(e) the wording of the survey questions and, if applicable, the margins of error in respect of the data obtained.

Broadcast of surveys not based on recognized statistical methods

Section 327 The first person who transmits the results of an election survey that is not based on recognized statistical methods to the public during an election period and any person who transmits them within 24 hours after they are first transmitted to the public must indicate that the survey was not based on recognized statistical methods.

Prohibition — causing transmission of election survey results during blackout period

Section 328 (1) No person shall knowingly cause to be transmitted to the public, in an electoral district on polling day before the close of all of the polling stations in that electoral district, the results of an election survey that have not previously been transmitted to the public.

Prohibition — transmission of election survey results during blackout period

(2) No person shall transmit to the public, in an electoral district on polling day before the close of all of the polling stations in that electoral district, the results of an election survey that have not previously been transmitted to the public.