



41st General Election –
Survey of Administrators
Regarding the Use of the
Voter Information Card as
Proof of Address

FINAL REPORT

Ce rapport est également disponible en français

Submitted to Elections Canada

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October 2011

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Methodology note and questionnaire available under separate cover on request.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this survey was to evaluate the impact of Elections Canada's (EC's) initiative that made it possible for electors to use the Voter Information Card (VIC) as one of two authorized pieces of identification at selected polling stations during the 2011 federal general election. Information was gathered using a telephone survey approach, relying on a brief and focused five to seven minute interview with administrators in seniors' residences and long term care facilities (n=751); First Nations Band offices (n=40); and student residences (n=17). The survey was fielded in June 2011.

While awareness of the need for proof of voter identification is near universal among administrators, awareness of the potential to use letters of attestation of residence or the VIC as proof of identification is lower (seven in ten). Just under six in ten respondents said that they received information from Elections Canada to explain the voter identification requirements for their location. There is some correlation, although not overly strong, between receiving information materials from Elections Canada and being aware that a letter of attestation could be used as proof of identity.

Most respondents indicated Elections Canada as their main source for information on these issues, although more than half were not clear on precisely who they had been dealing with, suggesting the potential need for additional steps to formalize the process, where possible, to ensure that institutional representatives are fully briefed. Satisfaction with the information provided by Elections Canada is high; however, when respondents provided additional comments, a small segment said that the preparatory steps and/or training could have been more rigorous, and that contacts should be initiated earlier.

By and large, respondents did not find the process of issuing letters of attestation of residence too onerous. Only half reported that they were asked for such letters by their residents. Most said that they issued 10 to 20 of these (averaging 17). Only the largest organizations, mainly long term care and seniors' facilities, issued upwards of 30 letters (averaging 35 letters in these cases). Few of those issuing letters said that the process required a lot of additional work from them.

On average, respondents were contacted four times by Elections Canada representatives in relation to the 2011 general election. A large majority said that this rate was reasonable.

The vast majority of respondents (85 per cent) reported they neither heard nor witnessed any problems encountered by residents at their organization regarding identification requirements. Just seven per cent indicated they knew of someone encountering problems with identification documents.

Many (two in three) said that use of the VIC as proof of identification made the process easier for residents to vote, although one in four did not feel that this made a difference. That said, this segment may not have felt that the process of identification was particularly difficult for residents before the addition of the VIC as a method of proving identification. Among those who provided additional comments, a sizable proportion (about 60 respondents) said that the process of voter identification still needs to be simplified in institutions.

1. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 SURVEY OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this survey was to evaluate the impact of Elections Canada's (EC's) initiative that made it possible for electors to use the Voter Information Card (VIC) as one of two authorized pieces of identification at selected polling stations during the 2011 federal general election.

This initiative, initially tested during the November 2010 federal by-elections in Dauphin–Swan River–Marquette, Vaughan and Winnipeg North, specifically targeted electors identified as being the most likely to experience difficulties in proving their address at the polls, namely those living on a reserve, in a student residence on a university campus, in a long term care facility or in a seniors' residence.

The information obtained through this research gathered information directly from local administrators in the targeted areas or facilities, and helped to determine the following:

- Levels of awareness and attitudes regarding the use of letters of attestation, as well as to measure use of these letters;
- Measurement of problems encountered in using the VIC as a form of ID;
- The contact and services provided by EC; and
- Suggestions for improvements regarding methods to assist administrators during a federal election.

Information was gathered using a telephone survey approach, relying on a brief and focused five to seven minute interview. The following describes the approach used to complete this work.

1.2 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

This study involved a brief telephone interview with the following target groups:

1. Administrators in a long term care facility (LTCF) or seniors' residence. In total, 751 administrators responded to this survey (395 in LTCF, 285 in seniors' residences and 71 in facilities that were both types simultaneously). Although the sample was randomly drawn from a list of 4,500 facilities, the initial list is likely not a full representation of the universe of such facilities in Canada and therefore the survey is considered a non-probabilistic sample (to which no margin of error can be associated).

2. Administrators in student residences on campuses. In total, 17 student residence administrators, out of 76 enumerated, responded to this survey.
3. Administrators in First Nations Band Offices on reserves, of which 40 out of 226 responded. Contact information was harvested on the Internet.

For the last two groups, the methodology was based on a census with the objective to complete as many interviews as possible. There is no margin of error associated with this type of non probabilistic sample. In addition, in the case of the student residence and First Nations Band samples the small number of respondents involved inhibits the capacity to draw definitive conclusions that would reliably represent all such facilities in the country. Nonetheless, the results remain highly informative about direct experience of a significant number of administrators in the target areas and facilities.

The survey was pre-tested with administrators of LTCF (10 cases in English and 10 cases in French) in order to ensure the clarity of the questions and that the wording and flow were appropriate. Respondents were given the option of completing the interview in either official language.

1.3 ORGANIZATION PROFILE

The largest proportion in the sample is either from long term care facilities (LTCF) or seniors' residences. Half of respondents (49 per cent) are from an LTCF, and just over one-third (35 per cent) are from seniors' residences. A further one in ten (nine per cent) work in a joint LTCF/seniors' residence. Regarding the two smaller samples included in the survey, five per cent are located on First Nations reserves, and two per cent in student residences.

The majority of facilities (67 per cent) had fewer than 100 eligible electors at the time of the 2011 election, and one in four facilities (26 per cent) had fewer than 30 eligible electors. Three in ten (30 per cent) were larger locations with 100 or more electors.

Large locations with 200 or more electors are more likely to have been First Nations reserves (50 per cent) and joint LTCF/seniors' residences (25 per cent). The seniors' residences tend to be the smallest facilities in the sample.

Table 1.1 Organization type, size and region

Location/facility type	n	% of Respondents
Long term care facility (LTCF)	395	49
Seniors' residence	285	35
First Nations reserve	40	5
School residence	17	2
Joint LTCF/seniors' residence	71	9
Total	808	100

Number of electors	n	% of Respondents
Under 30	211	26
30 to 59	153	19
60 to 99	176	22
100 to 199	154	19
200 or more	112	11
No response	2	3
Total	808	100

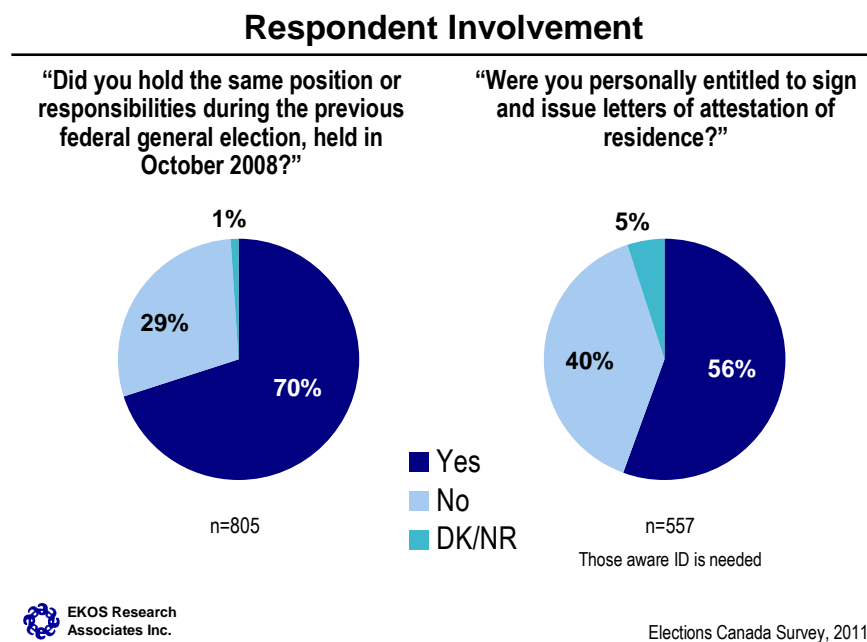
Regional distribution	n	% of Respondents
British Columbia/Territories	101	13
Alberta	84	10
Saskatchewan	66	8
Manitoba	41	5
Ontario	276	34
Quebec	130	16
New Brunswick	55	7
Nova Scotia	39	5
Newfoundland and Labrador	16	2
Total	808	100

- The sample contains proportionally more long term care facilities in Nova Scotia (77 per cent), New Brunswick (65 per cent) and Manitoba (71 per cent). Seniors residences are more commonly located in Quebec (63 per cent) and Alberta (54 per cent). First Nations reserves are more predominant in Manitoba (15 per cent).
- Respondents in New Brunswick are more likely to have worked in a facility that had fewer than 30 eligible electors (71 per cent). Also likely to have worked in small facilities of between 30 and 59 residents are respondents in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Nova Scotia (between 30 and 36 per cent of respondents). Those working in the largest facilities tend to be in British Columbia/Territories (30 per cent work in facilities of 100-199 electors) and in Manitoba (29 per cent work in facilities with 200+ electors).

2. SURVEY RESULTS

2.1 RESPONDENT INVOLVEMENT

Responses to the survey were largely provided by those with some authority on the issue (i.e., in charge of coordinating polling activities in their facility). Seven in ten respondents (70 per cent) held the same position or responsibilities as in the previous general election held in October 2008. Just over half (56 per cent) of these respondents were authorized to sign and issue letters of attestation of residence.¹



- Those responding from First Nations reserves were less likely to have had previous experience during the 2008 general election, although one in three did (35 per cent had previous experience, versus 70 per cent overall).
- Compared to the national average, respondents in New Brunswick were more likely to have held the same position they held in the 2008 general election (89 per cent).
- Respondents from facilities in Ontario were more likely to have had the authority to sign letters of attestation (64 per cent).
- Respondents in Quebec and New Brunswick were less likely to have had this authority (42 and 37 per cent, respectively), compared to the national average.

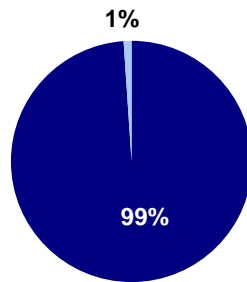
¹ Attestations of residence are letters signed by an authorized representative in order to prove where residents live.

2.2 AWARENESS OF VOTER ID REQUIREMENTS

Virtually all respondents in the survey (99 per cent) said that they were familiar with the requirement that electors must prove their identity and address in order to vote in a federal election. Familiarity with the potential to use letters of attestation of residence as valid proof of address for voting was a lesser known fact, although the majority of respondents (70 per cent) were aware of it. A full three in ten (30 per cent), however, said that they did not know about this.

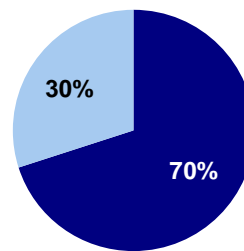
Awareness of Voter ID Requirements

“Did you know that electors must prove their identity and address in order to vote in federal elections?”



n=808

“Were you aware that your residents could use letters of attestation of residence as proof of address when voting?”



n=796

Those aware ID is needed

■ Yes
■ No



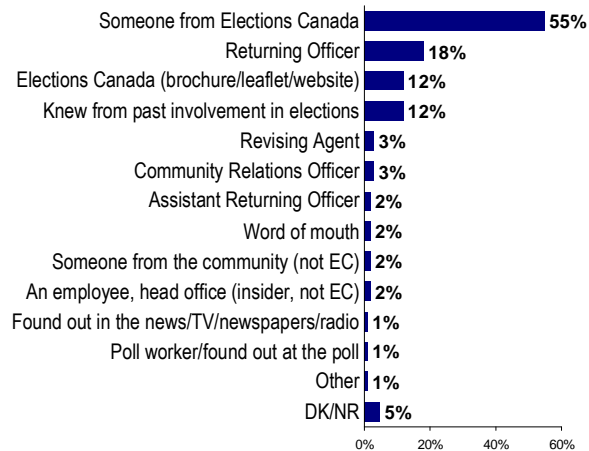
Elections Canada Survey, 2011

- Awareness that letters of attestation could be used was lower among smaller long term care facilities (e.g., with fewer than 60 electors) at 58 per cent, compared to 79 per cent of larger LTCF (e.g., with 60 or more electors).
- Awareness of letters of attestation was lower among respondents in Saskatchewan (58 per cent) and higher among those in Ontario (77 per cent) compared to the national average (70 per cent).

For most respondents, their awareness that letters of attestation of residence could be used to prove identity and address was based on information received from Elections Canada generally, although more than half (55 per cent) were not able to identify the exact source at Elections Canada from which they obtained this information. Nearly one in five (18 per cent), however, did identify the Returning Officer as the source of this information. One in ten (12 per cent) obtained this information from Elections Canada document, like a brochure, leaflet or EC website. Another one in ten (12 per cent) indicated that they were already aware of this provision, having had previous experience with federal elections.

Sources of Awareness

“How did you learn that residents could use letters of attestation of residence as proof of address when voting?”



n=557

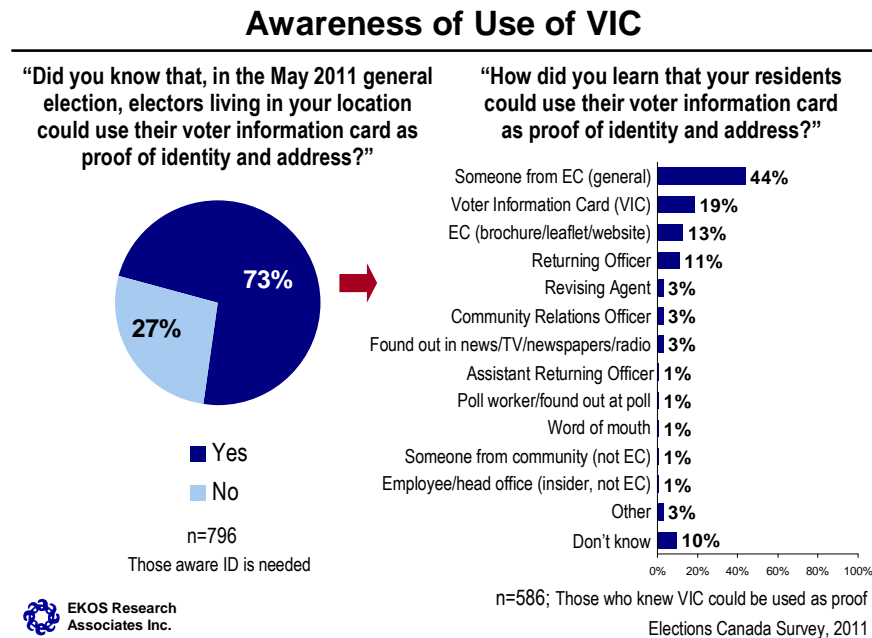
Those aware ID is needed and that the VIC could be used as a proof of address

Elections Canada Survey, 2011

- Compared to the national average, respondents in Saskatchewan were more likely to have identified the Returning Officer as their source of information for the letter of attestation of residence (41 per cent). Respondents in Ontario were more likely to have heard the information from someone (unidentified) from Elections Canada (63 per cent). Those in British Columbia/Territories were more likely to have known about it from involvement in a previous election (20 per cent).

2.3 AWARENESS OF USE OF VOTER INFORMATION CARDS (VIC)

Most respondents (73 per cent) were aware that electors living at their location could use a voter information card as proof of their identity and address. Once again, information about this provision was usually heard from someone from Elections Canada (44 per cent of respondents). One in ten (10 per cent) identified the Returning Officer as the source of this information. One in five (19 per cent) said they knew about this from information printed on the VIC itself. One in seven (13 per cent) learned about it from an Elections Canada brochure, website or leaflet. One in seven (13 per cent) learned about it from an Elections Canada brochure, website or leaflet. One in ten (10 per cent) were unsure where they got this information.



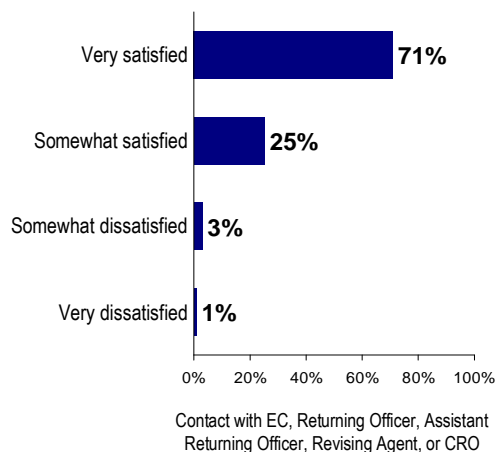
- Those who were in the same position in 2008 were more likely to report the Voter Information Card as the source of information (22 per cent, versus 13 per cent of those who did not hold the same position as in 2008).
- Compared to the national average, respondents in Manitoba were more likely to have learned about this through someone (unidentified) at Elections Canada (66 per cent versus 44 per cent overall). Respondents in Alberta were more likely to have learned about this through the Voter Information Card itself (36 per cent compared to 19 per cent overall).

2.4 LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH INFORMATION PROVIDED

Virtually everyone who reported that they received their information from an Elections Canada official (i.e., Returning Officer, Assistant Returning Officer, Revising Agent, CRO, or an official generally) was at least somewhat satisfied with the information they received. More than seven in ten (71 per cent) were very satisfied and another quarter (25 per cent) were somewhat satisfied.

Level of Satisfaction

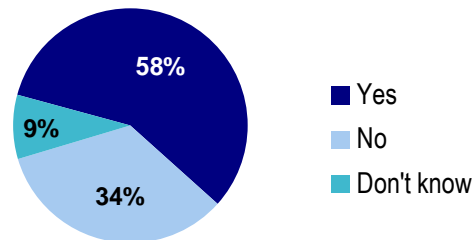
“Overall, how satisfied are you with the information that was provided to you?”



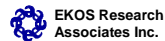
Of those who were aware that identification was needed in order to vote, almost three in five (58 per cent) said that they received information from Elections Canada regarding voter identification requirements. One in three said that they did not receive such information (34 per cent).

Receipt of EC Information

“Did you receive any information materials from Elections Canada that explained the voter identification requirements for your location?”



Those aware ID is needed



n=796

Elections Canada Survey, 2011

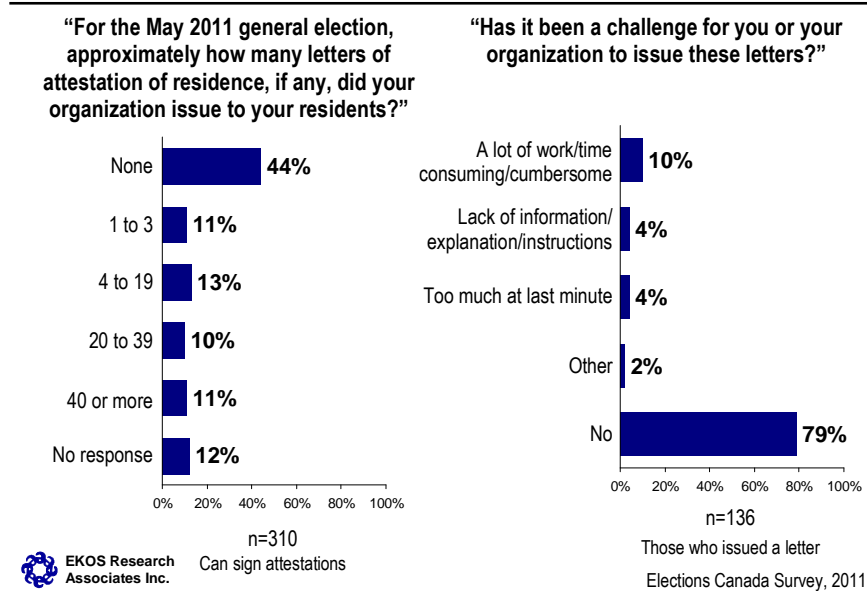
- Respondents who knew they were authorized to sign letters of attestation were more likely to report that they had received information materials about voter identification requirements (67 per cent compared with 59 per cent among those who did not have such authority). It is also interesting to see that the awareness of the potential to use letters of attestation of residence as proof of identity is higher among those who said that they had received information materials, although not everyone who said they had received information materials reported being aware that letters could be used in this way.
- Respondents from First Nations Band Offices were among the most likely to say that they received information materials (78 per cent, compared to 58 overall). Respondents in smaller long term care facilities (i.e., with fewer than 60 residents) were the least likely to report that they received such information (50 per cent).
- Respondents from facilities in Quebec and New Brunswick were more likely than the overall average to report not getting any information materials explaining the voter identification requirements (50 per cent each, compared to 34 per cent overall who did not receive information materials).

2.5 LETTERS OF ATTESTATION OF RESIDENCE

Of respondents who were authorized to sign letters of attestation of residence (n=310), fewer than half say their organization issued any letters for residents (45 per cent). Nearly the same proportion (44 per cent) reported that their organization did not issue any letters. Only a small segment of respondents (11 per cent) say their organization issued a large volume of letters (40 or more). The overall average across all respondents was 17 letters issued by their organization. Among only those respondents reporting that their organization had issued any letters, the average was 34.

Relatively few respondents from organizations that issued letters of attestation of residence said that there were any challenges to issuing these letters. One in ten (10 per cent) reported that the task of issuing letters was time consuming and a lot of work. Four per cent said that the lack of information, explanation or instructions made it difficult for them; and an equal proportion said they felt rushed at the last minute. Nearly eight in ten (79 per cent) said that they encountered no problems. Respondents who did not hold the same position in 2011 as they did in 2008 were more likely to have felt challenged by a lack of information or explanation about letters of attestation.

Intensity of Issuance of Letters

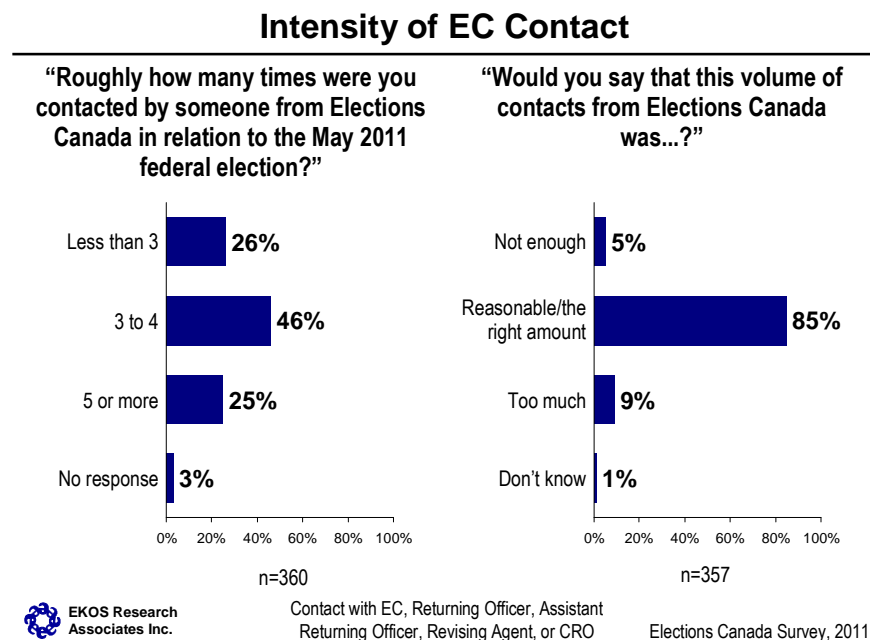


- Where letters of attestation of residence were issued, the average number issued was fewer than five in student residences, eight in seniors' residences, 12 in First Nations Band offices and 21 in long term care facilities..
- Organizations offering both long term care and seniors' residences (typically the largest organizations in the sample) had the highest average with 62 letters per organization among those that issued letters.
- Seniors' residences were the most likely to say that they did not issue any letters (56 per cent compared to 25 to 41 per cent in other types of facilities).
- Respondents in Quebec facilities were more likely to report their organization had issued no letters of attestation (62 per cent compared to 44 per cent across Canada).

2.6 CONTACT WITH ELECTIONS CANADA

Those who reported they had obtained information from an Elections Canada official were asked how many times they were contacted by Elections Canada in relation to the May 2011 election. Nearly half (46 per cent) were contacted three or four times. The average number of contacts is four. The average number of contacts is slightly higher in larger long term care/seniors' residences (i.e., those with 60+ residents) and in mixed LTCF/seniors' residences.

The majority of respondents (85 per cent) felt that the volume of contacts from Elections Canada was reasonable. Just one in 10 (nine per cent) said it was too much, and one in 20 (five per cent) felt it was not enough. Those who encountered problems during the 2011 election are more likely to have had a higher number of contacts with Elections Canada (five or more times). They are also more likely to have been dissatisfied with the amount of contacts from Elections Canada (i.e., too much or too little).



- Respondents in Quebec reported fewer contacts with Elections Canada than respondents in other provinces (38 per cent in Quebec had fewer than three contacts with Elections Canada, compared to 26 per cent overall).

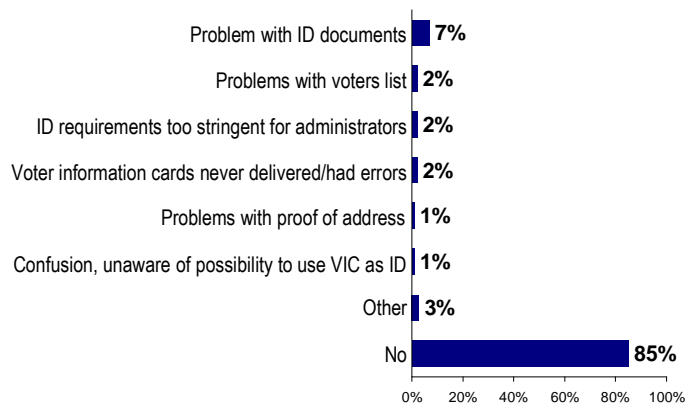
2.7 VOTER IDENTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

The vast majority of respondents (85 per cent) reported they neither heard nor witnessed any problems encountered by residents at their organization regarding identification requirements. Just seven per cent indicated they knew of someone encountering a problem with identification documents, such as difficulties regarding valid photo identification. Other problems each indicated by two per cent or less included:

- Problems with the voters list (e.g., not registered, deceased elector);
- Too stringent identification requirements for administrators (causing logistical problems);
- Voter information cards that were not received or had errors;
- Problems with proof of address;
- Confusion or lack of awareness about being able to use the VIC as identification.

Problems Encountered

“During the May 2011 general election, did you hear or witness any problems encountered by your residents regarding ID requirements at the polls?”



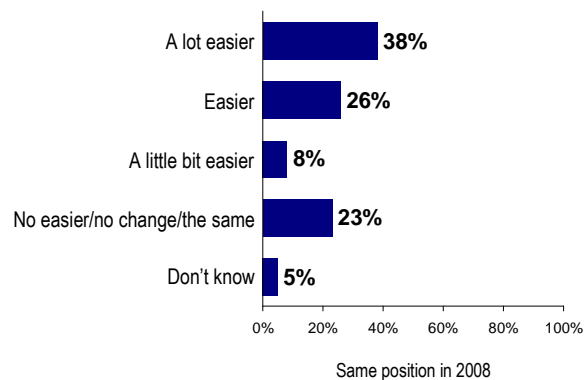
- Respondents who worked at a First Nations site were somewhat more likely to report knowing of problems encountered with identification documents (15 per cent versus seven per cent overall).
- Those from larger organizations (e.g., 100 electors or more) were somewhat more likely to report knowing of problems encountered with identification documents (11 per cent, compared to five per cent of smaller organizations).
- Those reporting problems during the 2011 election were less satisfied than others with the information they received (98 per cent compared with 85 per cent among those who did not report problems).

2.8 IMPACT OF VIC ON VOTING PROCESS

Respondents holding the same position in 2011 as they had in 2008 were asked to compare their experiences with voter identification, in light of the fact that Voter Information Cards were accepted as proof of identity and residence in 2011. Most felt this new measure made the voting process easier for residents compared to the 2008 general election. Almost two-thirds (64 per cent) said that the process was easier (26 per cent) or a lot easier in 2011 (38 per cent), and eight per cent felt the process had been made a little bit easier. Still, almost one-quarter (23 per cent) said they did not see any change or thought the process was no easier.

Impact of VIC on Voting Process

“Would you say that the use of voter information cards as proof of identity and address made it a lot easier, easier, a little bit easier or no easier for your residents to vote in 2011 than it was in the 2008 federal election?”



n=480

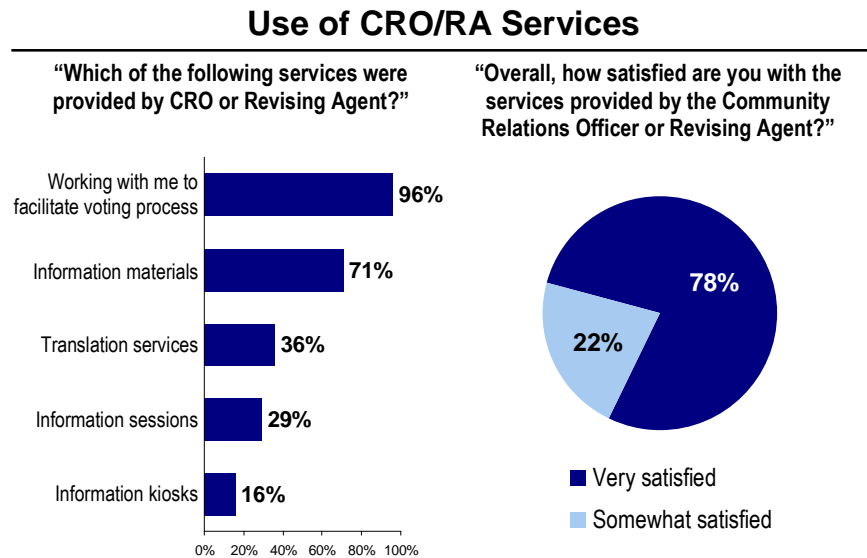
Elections Canada Survey, 2011

- Those who reported no problems in the 2011 election were more likely to have felt that the acceptance of the VIC had made the process a lot easier (40 per cent, compared to 25 per cent who had encountered problems).
- Respondents who were not authorized to sign letters of attestation of residence were more likely to have felt that the acceptance of the VIC had made the process easier (33 per cent, compared to 25 per cent of those who were responsible for issuing letters).
- Respondents from facilities in Alberta were less likely to report an improvement (36 per cent said that it was no easier in 2011, compared with the overall sample average of 23 per cent).

- An improvement to the process also seems less likely to have been felt among respondents from large seniors' residences and LTCF (e.g., 60 and more electors) where respondents were more likely to say there had been no change in ease of the voting process (30 per cent, versus 23 per cent of respondents at smaller facilities).

2.9 CONTACT WITH COMMUNITY RELATIONS OFFICER OR REVISING AGENT

A small number of organizations (n=45) reported having used the services of an Elections Canada Community Relations Officer (CRO) or Revising Agent (RA). Almost all of them (96 per cent) said the services they received facilitated the voting process. Most (71 per cent) also obtained information materials from these officials. Translation services, information sessions and information kiosks were other services that these officials were able to provide to respondents. All of the organizations receiving these services were at least somewhat satisfied, most (78 per cent) being very satisfied. The most satisfied were those likely to have used the information kiosk, information sessions or information materials (although numbers of cases using each service are quite small and these results are only directional at best).



2.10 SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Few respondents expressed additional concerns or suggestions for areas of improvement. But when they did, their suggestions varied widely between specific problems (13 per cent) and specific suggestions for changes in the future (32 per cent). Most commonly expressed concerns are that ID requirements should be simplified further; better training of poll workers and preparation by Elections Canada is needed; and more information about identification requirements and the voting process is needed. These suggestions, however, were each made by relatively small proportions of responding organizations (i.e., three to eight per cent). Most respondents offered no other suggestions, or reiterated their satisfaction with the experience and the improvement to the voting process. Seven per cent reiterated that their experience had been mostly positive or that accepting the VIC had improved the process.

Table 2.1: Suggestions for Improvements

Suggestions	%
Future improvements	32
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ID requirement in institutional environment need to be further simplified 	8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require better preparation/planning from EC or better training for poll workers 	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good experience overall 	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require more or better information about voter ID requirements and voting process, including posters 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accepting voter information cards improved the process 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using lists of residents would be better than issuing individual letters of attestation or relying on voter information cards 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require earlier contact or notification to allow better planning 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More assistance needed at the polls, more flexibility in who can assist 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Too demanding for local administrators 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voting by special needs requires more flexibility (such as the possibility to vote anywhere, send mobile polls at home) 	1
Specific Problems Encountered	13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List of electors was inaccurate, problems with reception of voter information cards 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Received conflicting or ineffective information from EC, info sent to or contact made with wrong persons 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impaired electors remain problematic, some are just not able to vote 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobile polls not present for long enough, or came at a wrong time 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addresses on the VIC should have included suite numbers or are being sent at home (VICs should be sent directly to residents) 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dealings with EC involved privacy issues 	1
No suggestions	52
Other	3

n=808; 387 had suggestions.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although almost six in ten respondents indicated that they had received information material, one in three said that they did not receive them (and another one in ten said that they did not recall whether they received them). Implications of these results suggest that information packages need to either be more memorable, and/or the circulation list should be carefully reviewed and follow-up contacts made to ensure that everyone receives a package and understands it.

Related to this, seven in ten reported awareness of the fact that residents could use a letter of attestation as proof of identity. This is fairly positive given that this is a recent change. That said, it will be interesting to see if a higher proportion of respondents will be aware of this in future elections.

Also, almost all respondents indicated that Elections Canada was the main source of information about this change, although more than half were not clear on precisely who they had been dealing with at Elections Canada. This suggests a potential need for additional steps to formalize the process, where possible, to ensure that institutional representatives are fully briefed and that they know who they are dealing with. While satisfaction with the information provided by Elections Canada is high, when respondents provided additional comments, a small segment said that the preparatory steps and/or training could have been more rigorous, and that contacts should be initiated earlier.

Although most respondents said that issuing letters of attestation was not a challenge for their organization, almost half of First Nations representatives said that it was a challenge. Perhaps a review could be conducted to see if anything can be done to create a smoother process for Band representatives on-reserve in future federal elections. One result of note is that First Nations representatives in the sample were the least likely to say that they had held the same responsibilities in 2008, which may explain why the process seemed more onerous for some of them.

It is also useful to note that respondents in smaller facilities were less apt to recall receiving an information package. They were also less aware of the fact that letters of attestation could be used as proof of identity. Again, particular attention to follow-up with smaller organization may prove fruitful in future elections.

Long term care facilities that also offer residence to seniors (i.e., the largest of the organizations in the sample) said that they had to issue a much larger volume of letters than other organizations (an average of 62). They also said that they had been contacted by Elections Canada representatives six times on average, and few said that this was too much.

Although a small sample, only four of the eight schools responding indicated satisfaction with the information provided, suggesting that some additional information may be missing for this particular type of organization.