
Municipal Election Research Tools



Municipal elections

- Municipal elections are unique. In Canada, most do not have political parties or organized slates – and even in cities where this is the case, voters are more fluid in their vote intent. For this reason, campaigns matter – **with a message and brand that resonates, candidates can rise from obscurity to win.**
- Municipal elections are also challenging operationally. Fundraising laws and spending caps place limits, and candidates are provided no or low-quality voters lists. The lack of quality media polling makes it more challenging to identify a winning coalition unless you have credible research.
- We recognize that every municipal election is different, and research needs will vary. A mayoral campaign in Markham or Vancouver might need to conduct focus groups in Mandarin and Cantonese. A candidate for city council might only have the budget to “take the temperature” and test a few issues. A mayoral candidate might need regular tracking as voters tune in closer to election day. **The PoliSci team will customize a research plan that matches candidates' needs and resources.**

Our Experience

PoliSci is Canada's premier political polling company. Over the past three years we have conducted public opinion research in over 30 municipal, provincial, and federal elections for political parties, media, and clients. Our team's municipal election campaigns experience includes:

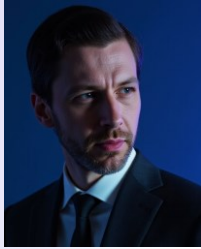
- Pollster for Olivia Chow during the 2023 Toronto mayoral byelection

- Pollster for Amarjeet Sohi in the 2021 Edmonton mayoral election

- Research lead for Gregor Robertson and Vision Vancouver in 2014, 2011, and 2008

Our team has experience conducting research in big and small cities, for mayoral candidates and councilors. This includes research for municipal elections in Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, Calgary, Edmonton, Ottawa, Mississauga, Surrey, Markham, Vaughan, Oakville, Maple Ridge, Sudbury, Barrie, Stouffville, Niagara, and Innisfil.

Our Team



Dan Arnold, former pollster for Prime Minister Trudeau during the 2015, 2019, and 2021 federal elections, and former Director of Research & Advertising in the Prime Minister's Office. Dan has polled for political parties in 6 provinces and 1 territory and has conducted polling for over 20 municipal election candidates throughout his polling career.



Matt Smith, former Chief of Staff and pollster to BC Premier Eby and President of Stratcom. Matt has had leadership roles on municipal campaigns for Projet Montréal, Amanda McDougall, Karen Fairbridge, Charlie Clark, Don Iveson, Amarjeet Sohi, Larry Campbell, and Gregor Robertson.



André Turcotte, a longtime pollster for conservative leaders at all levels of government and for several conservative institutions, began his career conducting opinion research for municipal races in and around his hometown of Laval. This early, hands-on experience with grassroots politics laid the foundation for a lifelong dedication to understanding and shaping public opinion.

Our Team



Shir Barzilay brings her experience overseeing three Ontario provincial budgets to support clients in translating their business goals into the broader economic landscape at all levels of government. Shir combines deep policy skill with pragmatic, real-world application. Recognized for her expertise in managing final stretch mobilization efforts, she holds a Masters degree from the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at UofT.



Mike McDonald brings experience as a campaigner and pollster. He was former Chief of Staff to BC Premier Christy Clark, and directed her campaign's come-from-behind election victory in 2013. He has polled extensively for clients and campaigns across Canada, including municipal races in the City of Vancouver, City of Surrey, other suburban communities in BC, and has managed nightly tracking projects in province-wide campaigns.



Rachida Chafai has polled on election campaigns in Canada and in Europe. She brings an analytical background to projects, using several advanced statistical tools to draw out deeper insights.

Our Approach

- PoliSci does not fall back on the “standard industry approach” – rather, we use new methodologies and questions to fully capture the emotional connection between voter and candidate.
- To this end, on our surveys we always strive to explore this emotional connection. We measure how voters feel about candidates rather than if they “approve”. From this, **we can recommend a “brand” for your candidate that is relevant and resonant to the electorate.**
- Modern politics is a visual medium, so we conduct much of our research online, where we can simulate how voters actually consume the news – by testing images, videos, or mocked up headlines. We use A/B tests to see the impact these stimuli have on perceptions of politicians. After all, we often find in research that what voters *say* they like is not always what causes them to change their vote intent.
- It is through this approach that we provide our clients with a true understanding of not just what the electorate thinks but how they *feel* – and how parties can leverage those feelings.

What does research tell you?

What is the **ballot question** this election?

➤ From this you can develop your message.

How well known is your candidate and their opponents? How do voters feel about them? What are their strengths and weaknesses?

➤ From this, you can develop your **candidate's brand** and **frame your opponents**.

Where is your existing base of support and where can you grow? What regions and demographics make up your **pathway to victory**?

➤ From this, you can target advertising and outreach.



Our Research Services

In an ideal campaign, we recommend a benchmark poll to help decide whether or not to run and/or to position the candidate out of the gate. This can be followed up with surveys at key moments during the campaign cycle or light tracking closer to election day.

Many smaller campaigns only have the budget for a single poll. In these cases, we'll talk through when the best time to conduct research is.

Our specific polling research services include:

Live interviewer surveys

Interactive Voice Response Surveys

Online surveys (we can recruit people via text message or online in smaller jurisdictions with limited panel coverage)

We have conducted polling in English, French, Mandarin, Cantonese, Punjabi, and Portuguese.



Our Research Services

We also offer several qualitative research tools to help test and refine your message, communications materials, and advertising.

These include:

In-person and virtual focus groups, conducted among swing voters or key demographics (e.g. youth, blue collar workers, Mandarin speakers, etc.)

Research diaries, where respondents share their feelings about the election via text or on an online platform over time.

Online qualitative surveys, where we can test images, videos, pamphlets, and other communications products.

The PoliSci Ad Optimizer. This is an online tool where we measure the impact of different ad creative after repeat exposures.



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CONTACT US TO DISCUSS!
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