



## Enrichment Activity – Secondary Schools Component

### **My Opinion Poll**

Teacher's Sheet

During this activity, voters in training will be asked to create an opinion poll and go into the field to survey the people around them.

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#### **Link with the Québec Education Program**

Social Sciences area – To construct his/her representation of space, time and society

#### **Objective**

- ✓ Understanding how opinion polls work and the influence they have during an election campaign

#### **Length**

60 minutes

#### **Material required**

- ✓ Examples of surveys that the teacher has found in the media
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#### **Icebreaker activity**

Present examples of surveys published in the media to students. Ask students if they have already answered a survey. If so, what was it about?

#### **A bit of theory**

During the election period, there are many polls in newspapers, on television and on the Internet. They are used to paint a picture of public opinion (the opinion of the majority of the population) on various topics. Surveys primarily ask citizens about their voting intentions, but may also ask them questions about their opinions of party leaders or their concerns. Of course, the effectiveness of polls relies on the truthfulness of the responses obtained.

## **Methodology**

For a survey to be useful and relevant, we must ensure that the group of people (sample) participating in it is representative of the whole population. So we survey equal numbers of men and women. Age, first language and place of residence are also taken into consideration during sampling. A strict methodology must be followed for a survey to be truly informative.

The media that publicize surveys are now required by the Election Act to disclose the details of their methodology, for example, the name of the individual or organization that conducted the survey, the date on which it was conducted, the number of people surveyed and the margin of error. Furthermore, it is prohibited to publicize the results of a new poll on election day.

## **Results**

Quite often, political parties refuse to comment on polls, which doesn't mean that they don't follow changes in public opinion very closely!

Disclosure of election polls can have a major influence on the segment of the population known as "undecided." Indeed, they may be tempted to vote with the majority.

## **Suggested steps**

### **First step: Create a survey**

1. With the class, choose an interesting topic for your survey, ideally linked to the current election campaign.
2. Determine who the target group will be, in other words who will be surveyed: The class? The school? Parents? People in the neighbourhood?
3. Determine the number of respondents, in other words, the number of people to be surveyed.

Note: If the target group is large, we suggest surveying 5% to 15% of the individuals (500 people surveyed in a city of 10,000 inhabitants, for example). Pay close attention to the representativeness of the sample by adhering as much as possible to the proportions of the target population. The sample must, for example, have the same number of girls and boys.

If the target group is small, you may decide to survey the whole group (the parents of students in one class, for example).

4. Refine the survey questions and response choices. Try to vary the types of questions asked. Examples:

Q.: If you had the right to vote, who would you vote for in the next municipal election?



# Voters in training

R.: Party X, Party Y, Party Z, etc.

Q.: Is exercising your right to vote in elections important for preserving democracy?

R.: Fully agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, fully disagree

## **Second step: Conduct the survey and analyze the results**

1. Give students the necessary time to go into the field to survey the people targeted using the survey developed in class.
2. Compile the responses.
3. Analyze the results: What conclusions can be drawn from them? What percentage of respondents agrees with various statements?
4. Publicize the results of the opinion poll in the school newspaper or during a presentation made to students from other classes.