

# WHAT DO CANADIANS REALLY THINK ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE?

A Summary of Public Opinion  
Research for Communicators

**MARCH 2021**



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## About Climate Access

Climate Access is a global network of climate and clean energy communicators, serving more than 2,000 members in 57 countries. Through Climate Access, members are connected to a diverse group of experts, cutting-edge research and proven techniques for mobilizing audiences to reduce emissions, prepare for impacts and support climate policies. Climate Access provides the knowledge that network practitioners need to take their communications to the next level.

[www.climateaccess.org](http://www.climateaccess.org)

## About the Climate Narratives Initiative

Convened by the Clean Economy Fund and members of Environment Funders Canada's Low Carbon Funders' Group, the Climate Narratives Initiative supports climate communicators in Canada through research and training, grants, hands-on communications support and peer-learning through a community of practice. COPTICOM hosts la communauté de pratique sur la communication climatique in Québec.

## Project Team

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*Cover: People wear masks during 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. Photo from Canva.*



## PREAMBLE

The following report is designed to help communicators understand public opinion on climate change in Canada. For those seeking more detail on attitudes in Quebec, we have included a specific chapter by Quebec-based communications experts and recommend the recent *Baromètre de l'action climatique*.<sup>1</sup>

This report was finalized at the beginning of 2021 after the Canadian government announced an enhanced national climate plan and introduced draft legislation for net-zero by 2050. Although we review the latest surveys, at the time of publication there isn't yet much research on Canadians' attitudes to these new developments.

To produce this report we reviewed publicly available survey and focus group results from 2019 to January 2021 (and cross-checked consistency with subscriber-only research). The goal was to dig beneath topline numbers, stress-test rosy results and identify attitudes that advance or block public demand for climate action. We have prioritized results where respondents were operating with context over “off the cuff” answers. In addition, we have emphasized results that are consistent across multiple surveys and have made sure to include distinctions between surveys of the general public versus actual voters.

## RESEARCH GAPS

We found a lack of Canadian research diving into the attitudes of specific audiences and also inadequate tracking of key indicators. For example, there is a lack of public research connecting Indigenous rights and social justice to climate concerns. There is little research addressing BIPOC audiences in Canada (especially relative to data gathered in the U.S) and inadequate understanding of the values and motivations of audience segments that are crucial to building a social mandate for climate action. There is also a lack of publicly available tracking over time of several measures that are important for communicators, such as demand for increased climate action.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Canadians are worried about climate

Canadians understand that climate change is a very serious threat. Although the pandemic is understandably the top priority it hasn't undermined concern about climate. But there are very significant barriers to engaging the "moveable middle" of the public and Canadians are now balancing economic and environmental crises.

- A very large majority of Canadians are seriously worried about climate change (over 75%).<sup>2</sup>
- Three-quarters of us are now making the connection between extreme weather and global warming.<sup>3</sup>
- The public is now broadly convinced that an energy transition is inevitable (71%)<sup>4</sup> and is highly supportive of shifting to clean energy (81%).<sup>5</sup>

There was a huge surge towards prioritizing climate change in 2019. Climate rose to the top tier of voters' priorities by the 2019 election, even surpassing health care and the economy in many surveys. The pandemic does not seem to have blunted concern although climate has understandably dropped below COVID and the economy in people's overall priorities for government. But even at the end of 2020, more than half of the public thought it was a good time to be ambitious on climate while only one-quarter figured it was a bad time.<sup>6</sup>



## There are big differences among audiences

The most disruptive climate divide in Canada is political identity. This often shows up as a divide between Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) (and People's Party) supporters and others. But it is most acute between the majority of Canadians and the 20-30% who tend towards “ordered populist” values.<sup>7</sup> Just 31% of CPC voters say climate change is “extremely” or “very” serious compared to over 60% for Liberal, NDP or Green supporters.<sup>8</sup>

There are well-known regional differences between Alberta/Saskatchewan and the rest of Canada, but age and gender are also important divides. Forty percent of under-30s describe climate change as “extremely serious”; only one-quarter of those over 45 agree.<sup>9</sup> There's also a major divide between women and men. Half of Canadian women say they vote on issues related to climate; that's only true for one-third of men.<sup>10</sup>

## A crucial difference between the base and “moveable middle”

While an overwhelming majority of Canadians now agree climate change is a major problem, only a much smaller group are reliably engaged on the issue or its solutions.

There is a “base” of a quarter of Canadians who are “alarmed” and consistently give very high priority to climate, and then a large “moveable middle” (roughly 45%) whose shifting attitudes and low climate literacy determine whether there's a firm

majority demanding climate action. For most Canadians, climate action is still understood in terms of issues like recycling, water conservation or plastic waste, almost none can name a climate policy without prompting.<sup>11</sup>

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## Engaging the large “moveable middle” is a major opportunity to galvanize a social mandate for action.

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It is important for communicators to understand the significant barriers to engaging the “moveable middle” that are obscured by polls showing big numbers worried about climate change. We cover obstacles like psychological distance, belief that success is possible and the public's understanding of the issue in a section on Obstacles to Engagement in this report. One result of the barriers is that there is a serious gap between the level of concern and the level of demand for more action.

## Canadians are pretty satisfied with climate action as it stands

At the beginning of 2021 (after the enhanced national climate plan was announced) 71% of Canadians graded federal climate action as “good” or “acceptable.”<sup>12</sup> That's only one data point but even before the new plan Canadians were pretty satisfied — polling results ranged from 42% to 57% saying the government is not doing enough to spur a clean economy or combat climate change.

In a global context, Canadians want the country to be a leader on climate and generally think we already are.<sup>13</sup> These attitudes have been consistent for many years and point to a lack of knowledge about carbon cuts in other countries. Even before the new federal plan, Canadians believed we were making more progress than our peers around the world — including countries that are clearly cutting carbon and deploying clean energy much more quickly.

## General recommendations

### HAVE AN AUDIENCE IN MIND

If you're addressing a large general audience (e.g.: through mainstream media), decide whether you want to mobilize “the choir” (the “alarmed”) or engage “the congregation” (the “concerned” in the moveable middle). Use plain language that people in your audience would use themselves.

### KEY AUDIENCES

Women, younger Canadians and New Canadians consistently express the highest levels of concern and are priority audiences for engaging the moveable middle.<sup>14</sup> There are also important regional and political identity differences among audiences, so be sensitive to context and use messengers that resonate with your audience.

### NORMS

It really matters what people think others believe, i.e. “second order norms.” Emphasize descriptive norms to break down climate silence to help people realize they're not alone. Use specific numbers when possible, for example:

- “80% of Canadians agree that climate change is urgent and needs action now.”
- Over 70% of Canadians know the transition to clean energy is inevitable and we can't keep delaying.”

- And do the same when talking about solutions, e.g.: “75% of Canadians want more renewable power and clean technologies like electric vehicles.”

### MENTAL MODELS

Emphasize the three mental models that researchers recommend to unlock engagement: that climate is a **proximate** and **moral** threat (happening to us/now, threatening our children, causing suffering) that requires **systemic** solutions (laws and regulations on fossil fuel burning — oil, gas and coal).<sup>15</sup>

### NAME THE PROBLEM; NAME THE SOLUTION

Especially for audiences in the moveable middle, emphasize that the lion's share of climate change (more than three-quarters) comes from burning fossil fuels in vehicles, buildings and industry and that climate change will keep getting worse until those emissions are brought down to zero.

Whenever possible, frame the conversation in terms of highly popular clean energy solutions and the widely accepted inevitability of an energy transition. Paint a picture of the solutions pathway, e.g.: We can remove fossil fuels from the electricity grid and run our vehicles and buildings on clean power.

### COVID AND CLIMATE

Acknowledge people's concerns about the economy and pandemic, especially among audiences where green recovery is polarizing (conservatives, Prairies) but, in general, don't shy away from pushing climate action because of the pandemic.

For centrist and left-leaning audiences, embed climate action and environmental protection in a broad social and economic effort. There is real polarization on this topic but a broad transformative agenda to address community

vulnerability, inequality, climate and racism is popular with six-in ten Canadians. Although majorities in all population segments hold this view, still be conscious of your audience: 63% of Conservative supporters say, “this is not the time,”<sup>16</sup> so tread more carefully and empathize with the concerns of conservative and Prairie audiences. Note that conservative-leaning women are much more likely to support a green recovery than men.

Focus on COVID recovery support for workers in transitioning to new energy jobs instead of supporting fossil fuel companies. Canadians are twice as supportive of the government acting to protect workers versus oil and gas companies. Even within Alberta, opinion is evenly divided 51%-49%.<sup>17</sup>

## **EXTREME WEATHER**

Extreme weather is often the most salient point about climate change. Researchers find that the most successful communication is to use extreme weather as an entry point, name the connection to climate change, the cause as fossil fuel burning, and pivot to talk about tangible solutions.

## **CANADA IN THE WORLD**

Leverage Canadians’ sensitivity to American comparisons.

- The Biden administration is moving fast to transition the U.S. off oil and fossil fuels.
- The U.S. has been cutting climate pollution over the past 20 years while Canada’s pollution is going up.
- Highlight tangible examples of the U.S. moving more aggressively to clean energy, e.g.: the state of Texas has built more wind power than all of Canada.

Emphasize popular values like leadership and doing our fair share. Canada has stepped up to take on big challenges in the past (Montreal

Protocol on ozone, phasing out coal) and can do it again on climate.

Are we just a small part of the problem? Point out that Canada is one of the top two climate polluters per capita. Even in absolute terms, Canada is one of the top ten in the world, despite its relatively small population. These arguments are effective in moving attitudes.

Give concrete examples of countries that are making real emissions cuts. E.g.: “The Brits have cut climate pollution by 30% in just the last 10 years while our pollution went up. Thirty years ago the U.K. pumped out a lot more carbon pollution than Canada but Conservative and Labour governments both cut down way below us.”

## **CARBON PRICING**

Don’t lose the overall context. Emphasize the normative case for action on climate change, then pivot to solutions, of which a price on carbon pollution is a part. Highlight the tangible benefits in your region — funding clean programs (where relevant), low-income assistance, and accelerating the transition by making pollution more expensive and clean energy cheaper. Keep situating carbon pricing within the broader context of urgency — accelerating to a clean economy/tackling climate change while reminding the audience about the massive costs of inaction.

Emphasize rebates. You want to avoid getting too focused on how the system works and losing context. But researchers find that talking about rebates drives a shift in support for carbon taxes and this is true across the ideological spectrum.<sup>18</sup>

“Price on pollution” sells much better than “carbon tax.” On average it receives almost 15% more support and especially among men, older Canadians and those living on the Prairies, so insert the pollution pricing frame in communication.<sup>19</sup>

# CANADIAN ATTITUDES ON CLIMATE CHANGE

A large majority of Canadians think climate change is a major problem and the level of concern has been increasing for several years. Climate rose to be a major priority in 2019 and it has stayed remarkably high during the pandemic — while most polls found a drop in priority during 2020, at least one survey continued to find climate at the top of the list (not including the pandemic) even in the second half of the year.<sup>20</sup>

## CLIMATE CHANGE IS A CRISIS

Global warming is a major crisis (Research Co. 2020)

**62%**

In the long term, climate change is as serious a crisis as COVID-19 is (Ipsos 2020)

**64%**

Climate change is extremely serious or serious (Abacus 2020)

**76%**

For the first time since 2007, climate was a top issue of concern heading into the 2019 federal election. It was one of the top five most influential issues for Liberal, NDP, Green and Bloc voters in exit polls. But note that it was one of the least influential issues for Conservatives.<sup>21</sup>

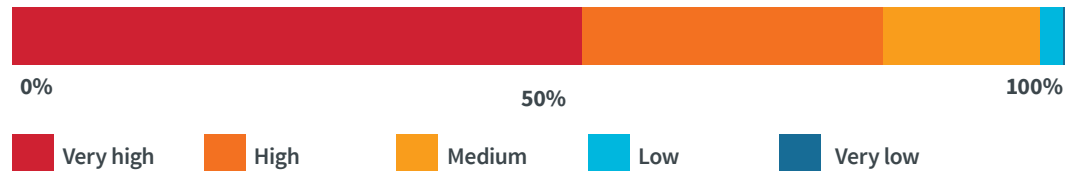
Although the pandemic may have displaced climate in priority, the background level of concern and support for action have remained constant and most Canadians want recovery measures to tackle climate and justice. In the fall of 2020, Canadians were actually more willing to shoulder some cost to address climate change than before the pandemic began.<sup>22</sup>

In fact, the Prairie Climate Centre found that Canadians had remarkably similar levels of concern about COVID and climate change even at the end of annus horribilis 2020 following months of relentless media coverage of the pandemic.<sup>23</sup>

**Q: How concerned are you about the COVID-19 pandemic?**



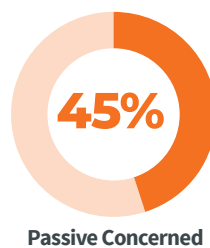
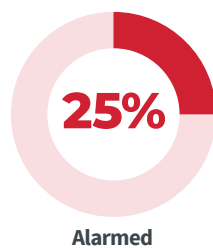
**Q: How concerned are you about climate change?**



Source: Prairie Climate Centre, University of Winnipeg (2020)

## Alarmed vs concerned: the “moveable middle”

The big challenge is that there is significant segmentation underneath the top-line numbers. Overall, one-quarter of Canadians are alarmed and engaged, while another 45% agree that climate change is a real problem but aren’t really informed or engaged yet. As a result, public support in specific, real-world situations is often unreliable.



**45% agree climate change is a real problem but aren’t engaged yet. As a result, public support is often unreliable.**

Research from l'Université de Montréal has adapted the 6 America's studies to the Canadian context, finding that the "Concerned" are by far the largest segment of the Canadian public (other segments include the "Disengaged" (5%), the "Doubtful" (17%) and the "Dismissive" (8%).<sup>24</sup> The big challenge in Canada is to build a firm social mandate for action by galvanizing the engagement of this large 'moveable middle' of concerned citizens in addition to mobilizing the alarmed.

The difference between the climate base and large "moveable middle" becomes very clear looking at the difference between encouraging poll results versus actual people in focus groups. While regular citizens have a sense of worsening extreme weather and generalized concern about climate change, very few can name any climate policies without prompting. Researchers find that environmental citizenship remains focused on issues like recycling, waste and drinking water. For example, "almost no one in focus groups notes the contribution of cars to greenhouse gas emissions."<sup>25</sup>

## Do Canadians want more climate action?

Demand for more action is much lower than generalized concern about climate change. Building public appetite for more ambitious climate action vividly illustrates the importance of the "moveable middle."

At the end of 2020, the federal government announced an enhanced national climate plan and introduced legislation for net-zero by 2050. Following those announcements, one poll found that 71% of Canadians rated the federal government's action on climate as good (24%) or acceptable (47%).<sup>26</sup>

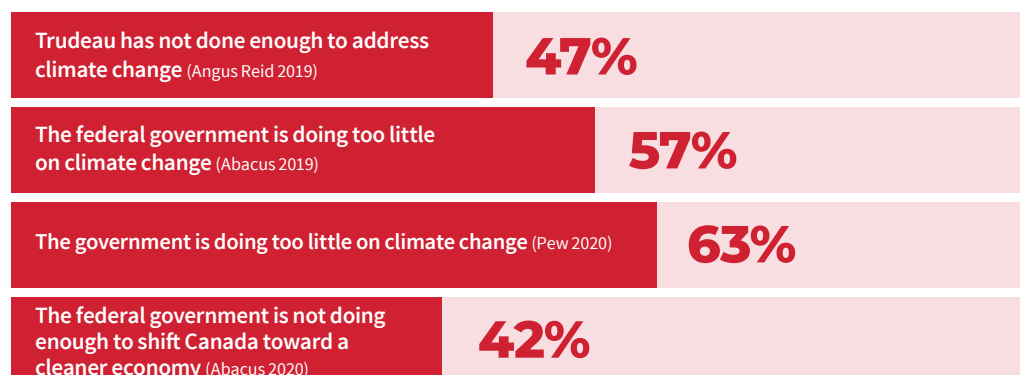
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**Demand for more action is much lower than concern about climate change.**

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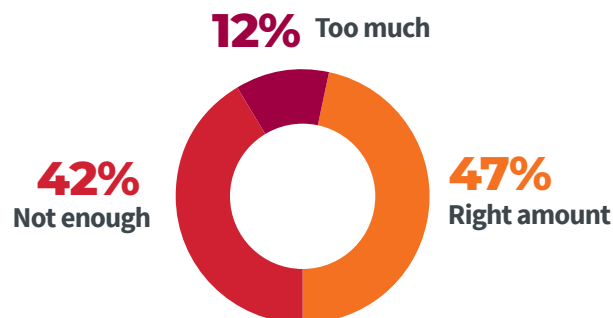
And even before the enhanced federal climate plan was announced, demand for more action was much lower than communicators might expect given the levels of concern. At best a slim majority thought the federal government was not doing enough to combat climate change or transition to a clean economy (most polls range from 42%-57%). Attitudes towards provincial action are very similar.

### DO CANADIANS WANT MORE?



Only NDP and Green party supporters say there's "not enough" climate action in large numbers (over 70%).<sup>27</sup>

**Q: When it comes to shifting Canada towards a cleaner economy, the government is doing...**



Source: Abacus 2020

## VOTERS ARE MORE SATISFIED THAN THE GENERAL PUBLIC

When we look at actual voters in the last election (as opposed to polling the public at large), the results are more sobering still. Half thought climate should be a top (14%) or major (36%) priority for the newly elected government. But just 30% thought the new government should be more aggressive than the policies it promised (37% said they would have been satisfied if the government simply enacted the policies from the campaign).<sup>28</sup>

## NET-ZERO

Looking at support for increased action begs the question of whether the Canadian public supports the goal of driving down emissions to net-zero by 2050. It's a safe bet that most Canadians don't understand what net-zero means and opinion hasn't crystallized. There are relatively few polls on this topic — some predate the flurry of net-zero promises and media coverage through 2020. There does appear to be growing support but also major doubts net-zero is possible and a big difference between "strong" versus passive support.

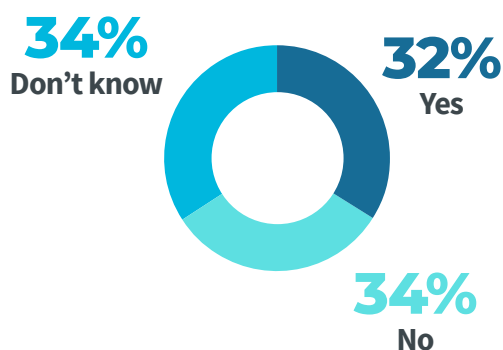
Overall, 63% of voters in the 2019 election supported setting stronger climate targets to reduce GHGs to net-zero. But only 34% "strongly" supported doing so. Eighty percent of voters in Quebec were supportive, but majorities in Alberta and Saskatchewan were not.<sup>29</sup>

Support for net-zero in Alberta looks like it has increased since 2019. Polling at the end of 2020 found 68% of the general Alberta population (i.e.: including non-voters) supported a goal of net-zero, with 34% "strongly" in support. Importantly, of those who support net-zero, fully 81% think the oil and gas industry can achieve the goal by using new technologies. Just 16% thought the industry would need to be phased out.<sup>30</sup>

Canadians are split into thirds on the question of whether it is possible to achieve net-zero by 2050.<sup>31</sup>

**Q: Is it possible to achieve net-zero by 2050?**

Source: Ipsos 2020



## Is Canada a climate leader?

Two-thirds of Canadians want the country to perform better than average in the shift to low carbon energy and clean technologies. But note that nine out of ten think we're average or better "as things stand today" (evenly split between average (44%) or more ambitious (45%).

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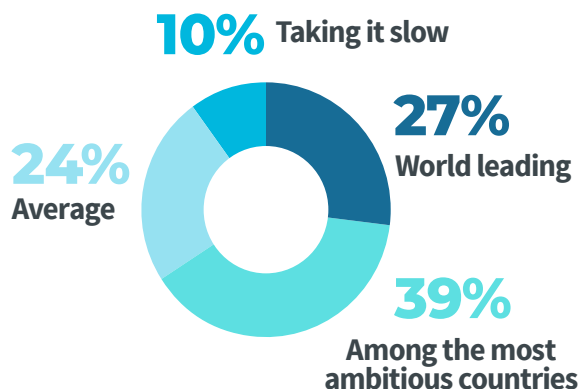
**Canadians want Canada to be a climate leader and think we already are.**

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Just 11% of Canadians think we're "taking things more slowly."<sup>32</sup>

**Q: Ideally, how would you like to see Canada positioned in terms of a shift towards clean energy and clean technology?**

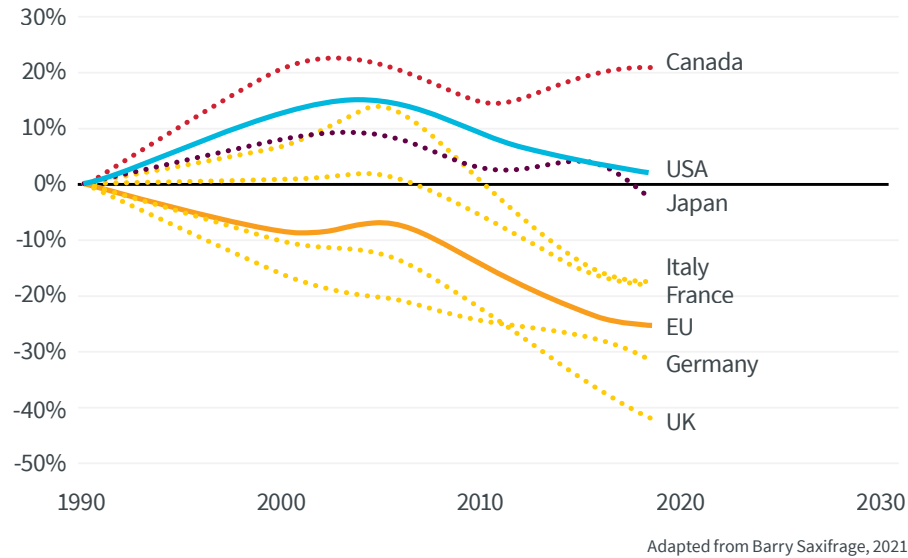
Source: Abacus 2020



When the international questions get more specific, Canadians think we're performing just slightly behind Germany, but well ahead of the U.K. — a country that has been cutting carbon emissions rapidly (the U.K has cut climate pollution by 30% in just the last 10 years, while Canadian emissions have increased). Canadians believe we're way ahead of the U.S. and China (even though U.S. emissions have been falling while Canada's have not).<sup>33</sup>

## CLIMATE POLLUTION SINCE 1990

### G7 Economies



In terms of communicating using “leadership” frames, note that the large majority wanting Canada to run ahead of the pack holds true in all regions except Alberta and among all political parties except Conservatives (CPC). But even among those audiences, the preference is to be average or better — only about 20% of Albertans and CPC supporters say it’s wise to move more slowly than other countries.<sup>34</sup>

## Proximity & extreme weather

Climate change used to be thought of as only a problem for the future but that is no longer the case. Canadians now see climate as a “here and now” issue — there has been a double digit increase in this belief since 2014. In some polls, as many as three-quarters now agree we are suffering from extreme weather because of global warming.<sup>35</sup>

### HAPPENING AND DANGEROUS

Canadians believe they or someone close to them has experienced the effects of climate change to some degree (Abacus 2020)

**73%**

My province has already felt negative effects of climate change (Université de Montréal 2019)

**70%**

Canadians say that climate change is affecting where they live a great deal or some amount (Pew 2020)

**64%**

But Canadians do still think of climate change as something that's a bigger problem for others than for themselves. This phenomenon is often called “psychological distance” and we review some findings in the *Obstacles to Engagement* chapter later in this document.

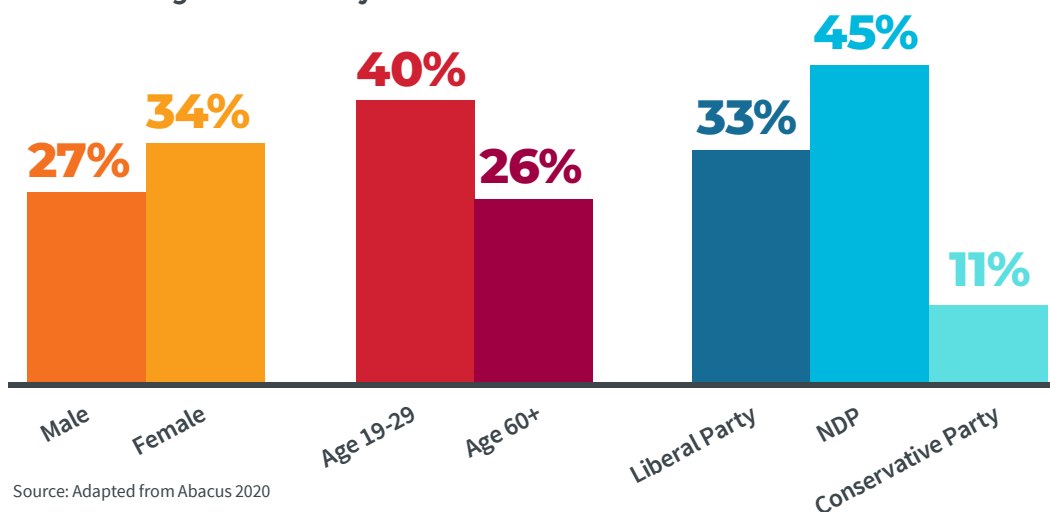
## Differences in attitudes (politics, demographics, geography)

There are significant differences in climate attitudes among audiences. The biggest divide is political identity: between Conservatives (CPC) and supporters of the Liberal, NDP or Green parties. Just 31% of CPC voters say climate change is an “extremely” or “very” serious problem compared to over 60% for supporters of other parties.<sup>36</sup>

Other important differences are that younger generations are more climate-engaged than older generations, and women are significantly more motivated than men. In fact, half of Canadian women tell pollsters they vote based on issues related to climate, but that's only true for one-third of men.<sup>37</sup>

### DIFFERENT AUDIENCES, DIFFERENT ATTITUDES

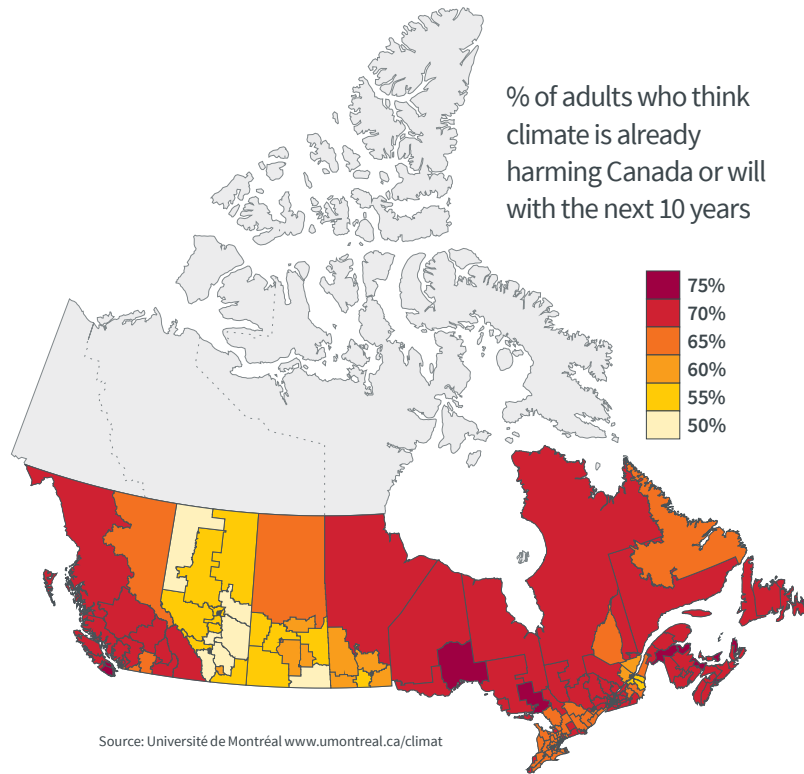
Climate change is “extremely serious”



### Half of Canadian women tell pollsters they vote on climate, but that's only true for one-third of men.

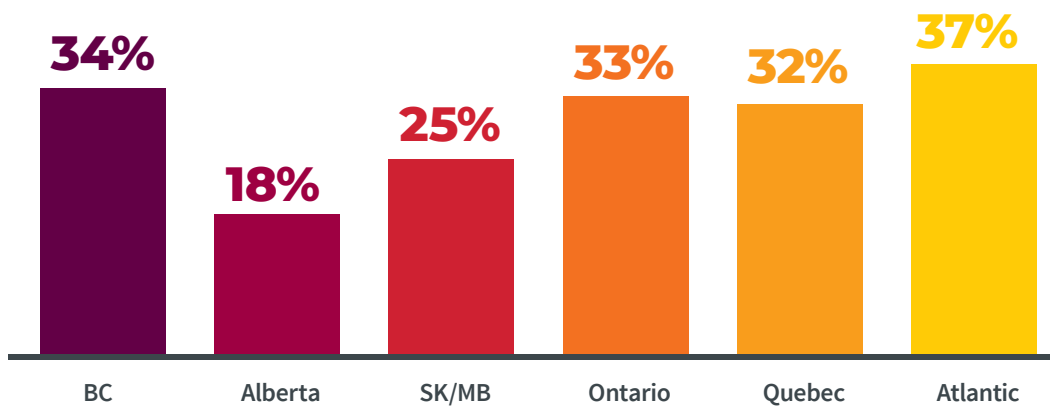
Given that the prairie provinces (and Newfoundland) are also the most economically reliant on fossil fuel production, it's not surprising that climate issues are most fraught in those regions. For a detailed dive into regional differences, consult the Canadian Climate Opinion Maps which provide national through riding-level findings on a series of questions.<sup>38</sup>

### Canadian Climate Opinion Maps



### DIFFERENT PROVINCES, DIFFERENT ATTITUDES

Climate change is “extremely serious”



Adapted from Abacus 2020

The climate divide is most pronounced among the segment of conservatives who hold “ordered populist” values or tend towards authoritarian ones. This issue is much less studied in Canada than in the United States. Research suggests Canada’s “ordered populist” segment is one-third of the population. This value set is much more prevalent in Alberta and Saskatchewan and may be the driving force behind “Western alienation” as well as the general rise in political polarization in Canada.<sup>39</sup> We recommend this interview<sup>40</sup> for a primer on the topic.

## Support for solutions

### CLEAN ENERGY SOLUTIONS ARE VERY POPULAR

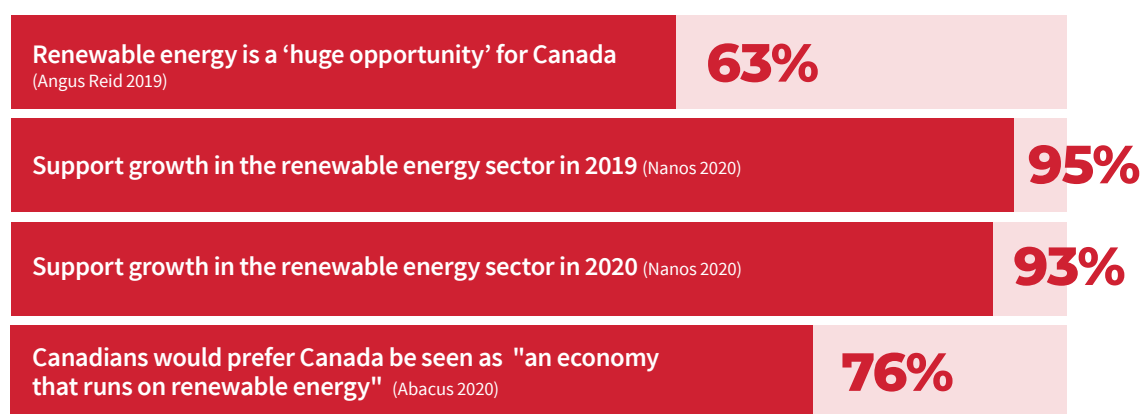
Canadians are highly supportive of clean energy and tangible examples such as electrifying transportation. This is a frame that resonates across all regional, demographic and political divides. Surveys and campaigners in the U.S. and Europe have also found similar groundswells of support when issues or policies can be framed in terms of clean energy.

**Twice as many Canadians support 100% renewables as support a complete phase out of fossil fuels.**

Only 7% – 15% of Canadians are opposed to the build-out of renewable energy or deployment of clean technologies.<sup>41</sup>

In one telling example, in the same poll twice as many people supported a shift to 100% renewable energy and electricity compared to a complete phaseout of fossil fuel use.<sup>42</sup>

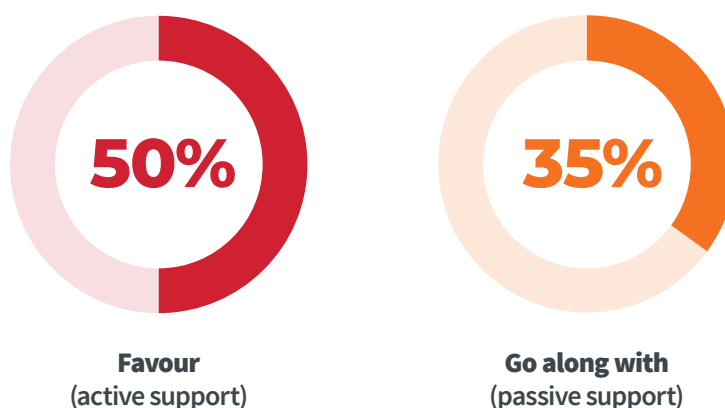
### SUPPORT FOR RENEWABLES



Electric vehicles are becoming a symbol of the transition. Three-quarters of Canadians now think EVs are going to take over, up six points in the last year and half (interestingly that’s an even higher number than the 64% who want it to happen). In terms of speed, over half of us expect the EV transition will happen within 15 years.<sup>43</sup>

But even within the clean energy frame, communicators should note that once specific issues arise, there is a significant difference between active and passive support that can get obscured by the overall numbers. Even on the most popular and non-controversial topics like installing cross-country EV charging or investments to attract EV manufacturing, half of Canadians actively “support” the initiatives, while another 30% are merely willing to “go along with” them.<sup>44</sup>

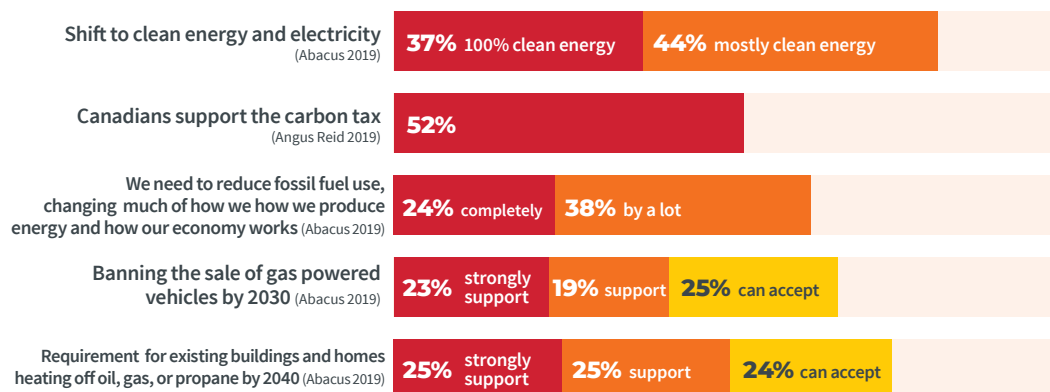
**Q: Would you ‘favour’ or ‘go along with’ cross-Canada e-vehicle chargers?**



Source: Abacus 2020

It’s important for communicators to reinforce the mental models that climate change is a proximate and moral threat (happening to us; now, causing death and suffering) and that it requires systemic solutions. These include laws and regulations by governments to accelerate the clean energy transition.

## SUPPORT FOR SYSTEMIC CLIMATE SOLUTIONS



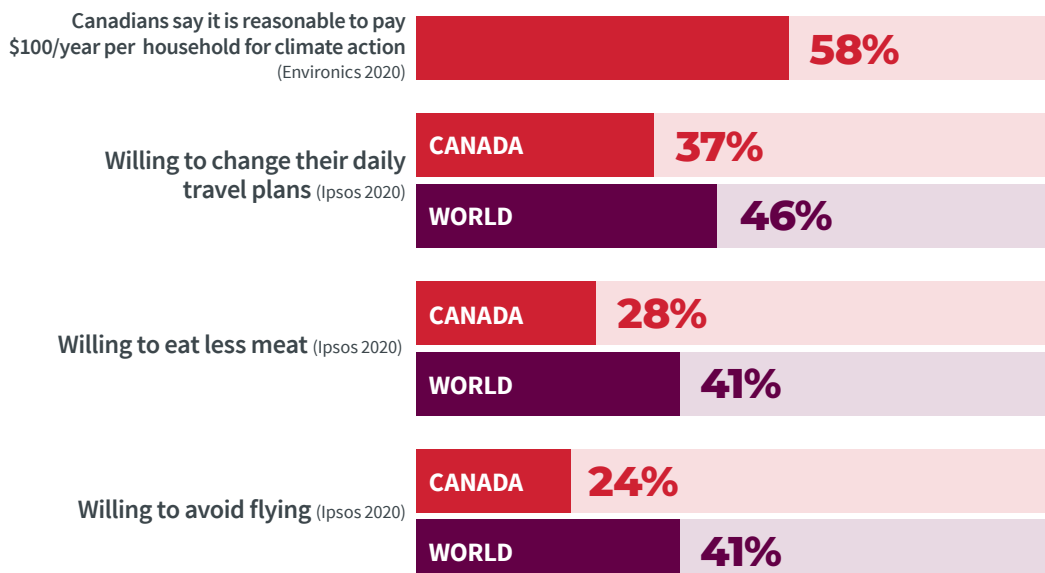
Canadians tell researchers that they are motivated to take action in their personal lives. In Quebec (one of the most climate-engaged regions), more than three-quarters (78%) of people say they want to do more. But only one in three feel that other people are doing their part, which underscores the importance of communicating with descriptive norms.<sup>45</sup>

The Quebec research confirms other findings across Canada: most people have adopted pro-climate social norms but beyond a relatively small segment of the population, not many people have much climate literacy or understanding of the problem and its solutions.

Even in Quebec, 63% would fail a basic test on which behaviours are relevant in cutting GHG emissions and very few (20%) feel able to explain concepts such as a “carbon footprint.”

When it comes to taking action in our personal lives, Canadians appear to lag behind the global averages, as suggested by the chart below.

### SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUAL CLIMATE SOLUTIONS



# COMMUNICATING CLIMATE CHANGE IN QUEBEC

## Observations from the research

1. **Despite the current pandemic, the vast majority of Quebecers (79%) believe it is imperative that urgent action be taken to address climate change.**<sup>46</sup> Moreover, a strong majority of Quebecers (62%) — more than Canadians from other provinces — continue to believe that **protecting the environment must take precedence**, even if it results in an economic slowdown or job losses. They also strongly believe that **now is the best time to step up with ambitious measures to deal with climate change.**<sup>47</sup>

A Léger survey from last June found that 83% of Quebecers hoped that the government would do as much or more for the environment and climate change in the context of recovery measures, even at a time when economic insecurity and job losses are affecting many.

2. **In spite of strong public consensus, there is a worrisome group of non-believers:**

A huge majority of Quebecers (both Anglos and Francos) do not need any convincing of the existence of climate change, or the urgency of doing more. Generally speaking, those most convinced and mobilized are young people and women.

However, a block of 20-25% of Quebecers seem to buy — with varying degrees — into arguments by climate skeptics to the effect that climate change is a “myth,” that science has not taken an entirely “clear” position on the matter, that not much can be done or that now is not the time to act due to the impact on the economy. They include some Quebecers who are indifferent (14%), inactive (12%) or worried (13%) as per Barometer 2020.<sup>48</sup> Men, residents of the Greater Quebec region and Conservative voters are more likely to be among the “skeptics.” The term “climate change” could possibly become “toxic” ideologically for a minority of Quebecers for whom opposition to climate change could become an identity characteristic.

3. **The dilemma – whether to speak about the “environment” or “climate change”?**

Protecting the environment results in a slightly higher buy-in than fighting climate change, particularly in the Quebec region and among men in Montreal and Quebec City.

4. **Quebecers have taken an ambiguous stance with respect to urgency:** Although Quebecers are aware of the urgency like other Canadians, they seem to favour small steps — an incremental approach — in dealing with climate change rather than “aggressive” policies.
5. **The strength of the intergenerational equity argument:** Quebecers very willingly subscribe to intergenerational equity arguments. They are aware that the older generation is not doing enough to protect younger generations, and a strong majority agrees with young people that “radical” action must be taken.

## **Climate crisis and pandemic – specific advice to communicators**

During the course of this pandemic, the environment and climate change can be freely discussed, especially when these topics are tied in with health, solidarity and quality of life.

People can strongly insist on a green and inclusive recovery, not merely a return to across-the-board growth like before, especially by identifying what new normalcy will look like when social interactions resume.

The arguments put forward by those who would put the economy ahead of the environment can be easily countered by showing that a green and inclusive economy brings everyone together.

## **Suggested communication objectives for 2021**

### **MAIN OBJECTIVES**

Three main objectives in the context of a climate crisis:

1. **Communicate the fact that Quebecers are even more convinced of the importance of countering climate change.**

Use the “we” (e.g., “we” in Quebec, “we Quebecers”) and strengthen the climate consensus (e.g., we are the most mobilized people and society in the world when it comes to climate issues).

2. **Communicate that the time is right to be even more ambitious – in the action we take collectively as governments, businesses and personally to reduce emissions.**

Use positive reinforcement arguments (e.g., we are moving in the right direction, we are taking important action, and the situation requires us to do more.)

Encourage individuals, communities, businesses and governments to take additional action that is more ambitious and give positive exposure to those who are doing so.

### **3. Make communication efforts aimed specifically at the unconvinced hardliners in Quebec, in parallel with messages designed for the general public.**

Generally speaking, none of the climate communication campaigns have yet zeroed in on the more recalcitrant segments. Such campaigns should be waged through channels of communication that are specific and relevant to these segments and not “mixed in” with general messages intended for Quebec’s population in general.

## **Possible tactics**

1. To convey the message about urgency, **young people, scientists, and leaders not directly associated with the environment are the best spokespersons**, particularly those not seen as belonging to environmental groups and not associated with brash actions. Significant exposure should be given to spokespersons that the most resistant Quebecers (e.g., those outside Montreal and mainly men) identify with.

One half of Quebecers (49%) find ecologists to be “too extremist,” which hampers the latter’s ability to make gains with the more prudent segments of society. Young spokespersons perceived by these segments as “our young people” (their own children, for example) are more likely to convince them of the existence of a climate and environmental crisis and the urgency of acting accordingly.

2. **Communications must simultaneously touch on the dual imperative of taking action to save the environment AND counter climate change.**
3. **Communication must stress leadership, sincerity and determination.** Quebecers, primarily the most prudent ones, must be able to go along with a discourse and spokespersons who are steadfast in adversity and project an image of order, competence and control.

## **Proposal – General Key Messages for 2021**

**Message 1 – Maintain and broaden a strong consensus in Quebec:** In Quebec, we know the environment is deteriorating and that climate change today is a crisis that must be handled with utmost urgency. Our future and particularly that of our young people are at stake.

**Message 2 – The situation is worsening, and strong action is expected of our governments.** Current actions are no longer sufficient.

**Message 3 – Our emergence from the pandemic must provide us with the means of taking on the other challenges confronting us – inequalities and climate change.**

# COVID, CLIMATE AND A “JUST TRANSITION”

Climate concern has remained remarkably robust during the pandemic. In fact, nearly two-thirds (64%) of Canadians think climate is as serious an issue as COVID in the long term.<sup>49</sup>

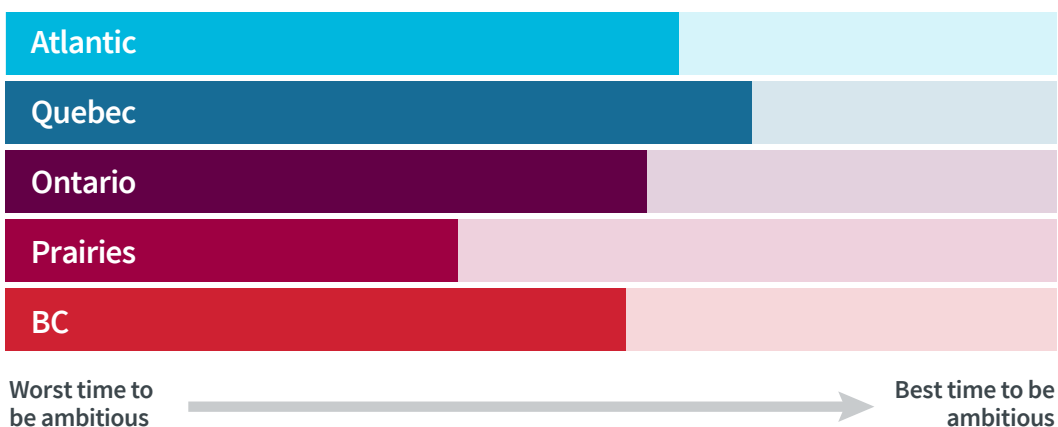
While studies show a decrease in prioritization during the pandemic, climate continues to rank as a high priority and Canadians generally think it is still a good time to take action.<sup>50</sup>

## SUPPORT FOR AMBITION IS HIGH DESPITE PANDEMIC

**Q: How good a time is it for Canada to be ambitious in addressing climate change even if there are costs to the economy?**

*Mean rating on a scale of 0-10, where 0 means this is absolutely the worst time to be ambitious, and 10 this is absolutely the best time to be ambitious.*

*Adapted from Nanos 2020*

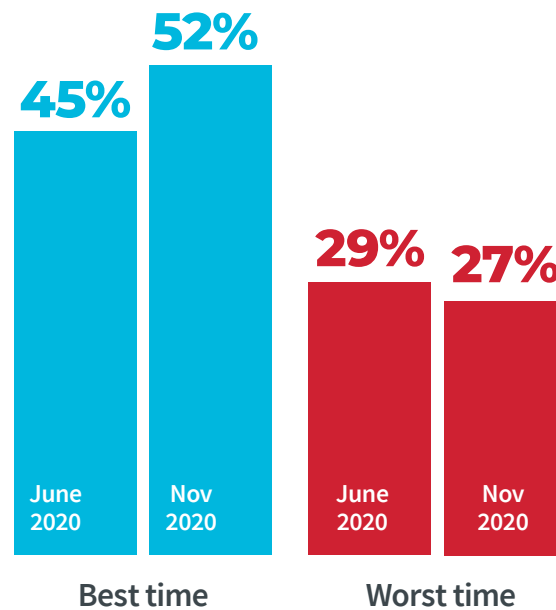


In fact, the number of Canadians who think it's a good time to be ambitious on climate actually appears to be rising the longer the pandemic goes on.<sup>51</sup>

**A transformative recovery to address inequality, climate and racism is popular with six-in ten Canadians.**

#### SUPPORT FOR AMBITION IS RISING DURING PANDEMIC

**Q: How good a time is it for Canada to be ambitious in addressing climate change even if there are costs to the economy?**



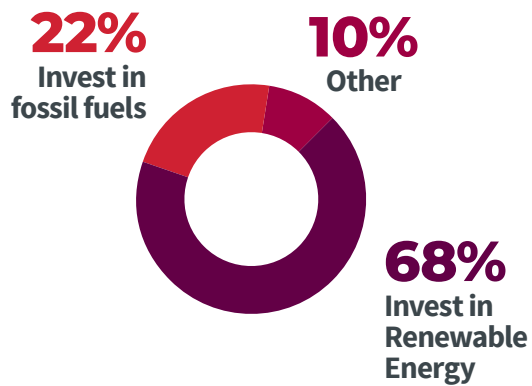
Adapted from Nanos 2020

### Just Transition

In terms of stimulus and recovery plans, there is widespread agreement on prioritizing renewable energy over fossil fuels (68%-22%).<sup>52</sup> And Canadians are twice as supportive of the federal government helping Alberta's workers "build new areas of economic opportunity" versus protecting oil and gas companies. Even within Alberta, opinion is evenly divided 51%-49%.<sup>53</sup>

## SUPPORT FOR GREEN STIMULUS SPENDING

**Q: Thinking about this new government spending, which of the following do you think should be the priority?**



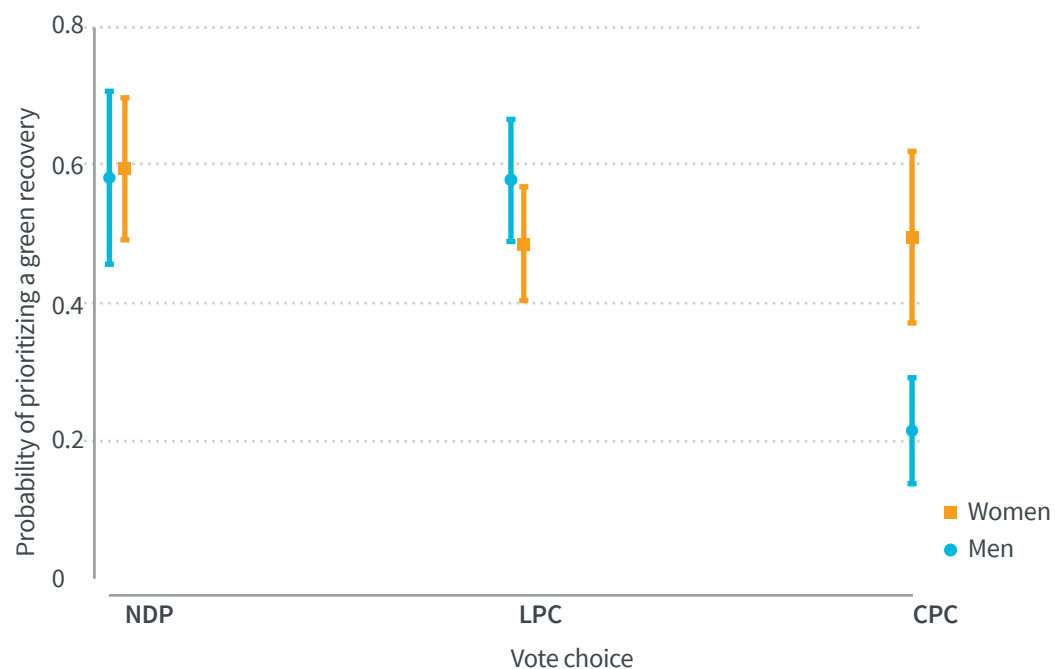
Adapted from Environics 2020

On the broader question of “building back better” there is a solid majority in support. In fact, we are at a 30-to-40-year high in support for progressive policy. A transformative agenda to address inequality, climate and racism is popular with six in ten Canadians.

Although majorities in all demographics hold this view, note that there is polarization and an important political divide on this issue: 63% of Conservative supporters say, “this is not the time.”<sup>54</sup> So, tread carefully with Conservative and Prairie audiences.

Conservative women are twice as likely to support a green recovery than men. In fact, they are just as likely to be supportive as women who lean towards the federal NDP or Liberal party.

### CPC women are just as likely as NDP and LPC to support green recovery



Source: Lachapelle, Erick. 2021. Which Canadians support a green (and just) recovery? EcoAnalytics

But Canadians are understandably balancing economic and environmental crises. For example, while people are more likely than not to say it's a good time to act on climate, it is also the first time in five years that less than half are willing to prioritize the environment if it causes economic or job loss.<sup>55</sup>

So, it's important to stress-test opinion on COVID recovery. Only one-quarter of Canadians (the "Alarmed" once again) "strongly" support connecting recovery spending to climate/environment. When asked whether the priority should be getting existing businesses back on their feet versus a green recovery, almost twice as many Canadians come down on the side of existing businesses.

Meanwhile, 73% of Canadians think natural resource industries like oil and gas should be part of the recovery so long as they are working on addressing climate change.<sup>56</sup>

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**Stress Test: If they have to choose, twice as many Canadians prioritize existing businesses versus green recovery.**

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# 4 TAXING CARBON (AHM... “POLLUTION PRICING”)

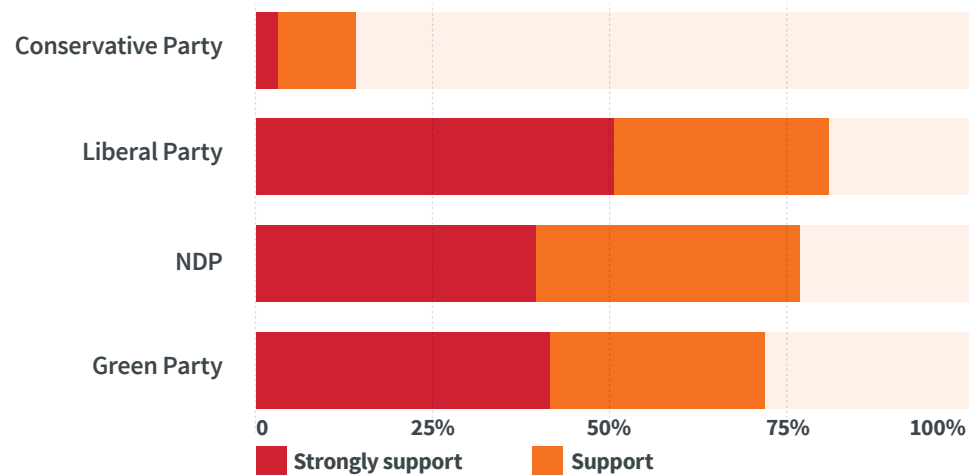
Pollution pricing is one of the most contentious climate solutions but communicators have to get it right since it's a prime battleground in the Canadian climate conversation. One of the big problems is that, like many debates over specific policies, the audience loses track of context. So, it's important to keep situating carbon pricing within the broader context of accelerating to a clean economy/tackling climate change while reminding the audience about the massive costs of inaction. It's important to emphasize the rebates, since this shifts negative attitudes, but remember to talk less about how it works and more about what it does — funding clean programs (where relevant) and accelerating the transition we all agree needs to happen.<sup>57</sup>

At the time of writing, there hasn't been much new polling since the new federal pricing plan was announced and attitudes on the carbon tax have been pretty stable for many years. But there are indications that conservative audiences may be getting more supportive. See, for example the surveys commissioned by Clean Prosperity.<sup>58</sup>

Surveys from the last few years show that, overall, Canadians are pretty evenly split over the carbon tax. Heading into the 2019 election, half supported the carbon tax, while half opposed it.

But the real story is political. Almost 9 out of 10 Conservative party supporters were opposed while over 70% of NDP/Green/Liberals supported the carbon tax. Another way to slice the numbers is that 86% of Conservatives opposed the carbon tax while 84% of Liberals supported it.<sup>59</sup>

### SUPPORT FOR THE CARBON TAX BY POLITICAL PARTY IN 2019



Adapted from Angus Reid 2019

The same study shows there is also an important regional divide. 55% of Albertans were “strongly opposed” — across Alberta, 68% were opposed to some degree. By contrast, 66% of Quebecers supported the carbon tax.

When communicating, remember to keep bringing your audience back to the overall context. Emphasize the normative case for action on climate change, then pivot to solutions, of which a price on carbon pollution is a part.

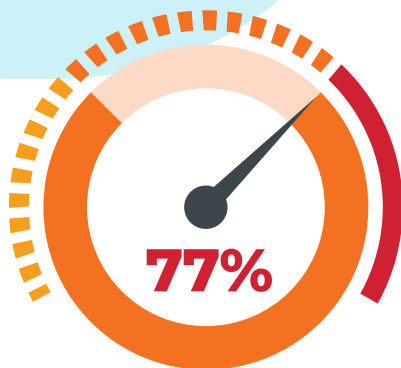
Don’t only talk about how it works. Highlight the tangible benefits in your region — funding clean programs (where relevant), assistance for people with lower incomes, and accelerating the transition by making pollution more expensive and clean energy cheaper. Continue to situate carbon pricing within the broader context: the urgent need to accelerate the shift to a clean economy/tackle climate change while reminding the audience about the massive costs of inaction.

Emphasize rebates. Most people don’t know they exist and researchers find that talking about rebates increases support for carbon taxes, among Canadians across the ideological spectrum.<sup>60</sup>

Putting a “price on pollution” is more popular than a “carbon tax.” On average it receives almost 15% more support – especially among men, older Canadians and those living on the Prairies; so use the pollution pricing frame in your communications.<sup>61</sup>

# KEEPING UP WITH THE YANKS

The shift from Trump to Biden is already creating new narratives around climate and energy in Canada. There are real opportunities to galvanize the Canadian public in response.



**Want Canada to keep up if the Americans accelerate action on climate or the energy transition.**

Source: Abacus 2020

Canadians are ready to believe that climate action will accelerate under a Biden administration. Even prior to inauguration, two-thirds of Canadians believed that Biden would make climate a major priority. And more than three-quarters of Canadians want Canada to keep up if the Americans accelerate action on the energy transition. Even in Alberta, 65% agree we had better keep pace.<sup>62</sup>

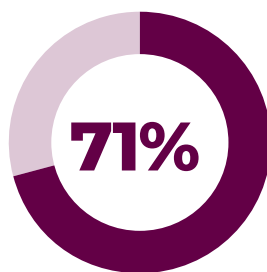
# ENERGY TRANSITION

## Overall attitudes on energy transition

Canadians now believe that a clean energy transition is both necessary and inevitable and they want governments to adapt. This is true even in Alberta, the province with the most at stake in a transition off fossil fuels.

These high-level attitudes can get bogged down in the specifics of what this entails, especially when they come in conflict with the oil and gas industry. And opinions are strongly influenced by how aggressive the transition might be. But first let's look at Canadians' general attitudes to the ongoing energy transition.

In January 2020...

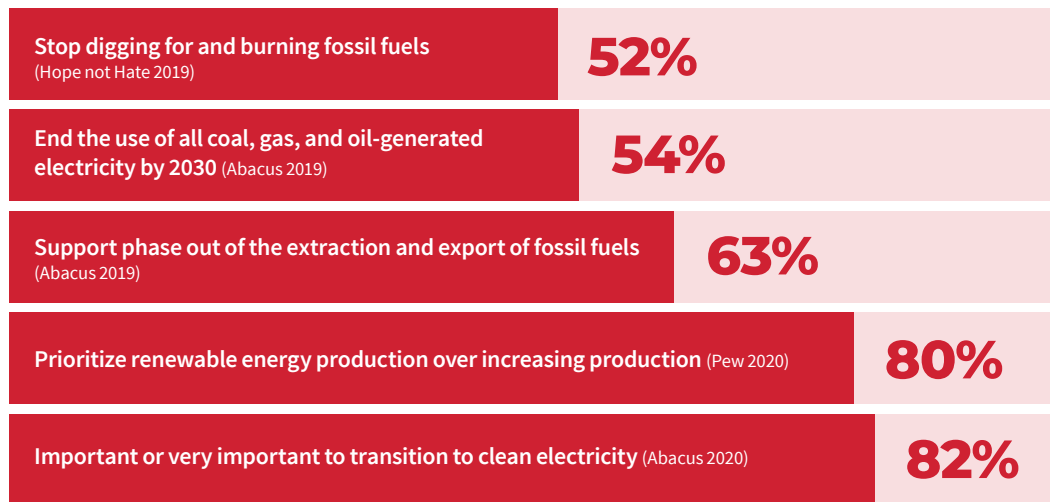


of Canadians said an **energy transition** is certain or likely to happen.

Source: Abacus 2020

Canadians overwhelmingly understand that the energy transition is a global phenomenon, not something we only talk about in Canada. Three-quarters believe it will be beneficial in the long term and 70% say that it's necessary "whether we like it or not." These results hold even though 59% think it will make their life more expensive.<sup>63</sup>

## ATTITUDES ON ENERGY TRANSITION



The divide between oil producing regions and the rest of Canada is significant but not as large as the media presents and definitely not as extreme as the bluster on social media. Albertans understand that the transition is a global event in the same proportion as other Canadians. They are more likely to think it will make life more expensive but most Albertans (58%) think it's necessary. A slim majority of Albertans think it will be beneficial for Canada in the long term although they are evenly split on whether it will be good or bad for Alberta. But note that just 43% of Albertans want to see the transition happen faster.<sup>64</sup>

## Fossil fuel production

Despite strong opinion about the inevitability of a clean energy transition, Canadians are evenly split over growing the oil and gas industry. And the public is generally willing to believe it is possible to have both climate action and ongoing fossil fuel production. However there is evidence that support for fossil fuel production is shrinking while support for a more aggressive transition is growing.

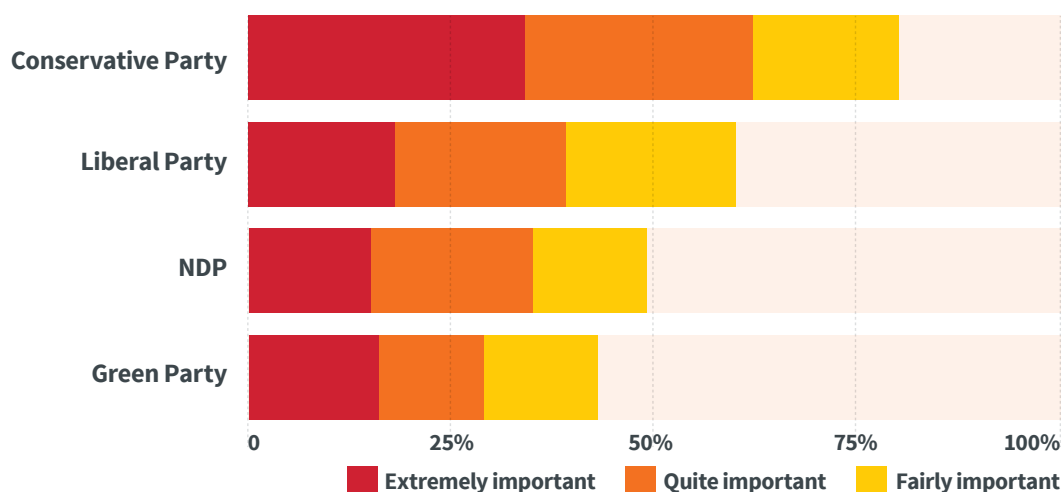
### “BOTH-AND” ATTITUDE

The “both-and” attitude is not just aggregate public opinion — it's an attitude held within the minds of most Canadians. Leading into the 2019 election, three-quarters of those who prioritized climate also wanted to see more investment in the oil and gas sector. And the reverse was also true: even among those who wanted the industry to be a main focus of the next government, 80% wanted investment in climate change efforts.<sup>65</sup>



In 2020, there was broad agreement that the oil and gas industry is important to the future of Canada's economy. Only among Bloc Quebecois and Green party supporters do significantly less than half feel that it's important to our future.<sup>66</sup>

**Q: How important is oil and gas to Canada's future economy?**



Adapted from Aguirre, R., Bird, S., Frank, B., Gattinger, M. (2020)

Canadians are generally willing to believe it is possible to reconcile climate action with a more responsible oil and gas sector.<sup>67</sup>

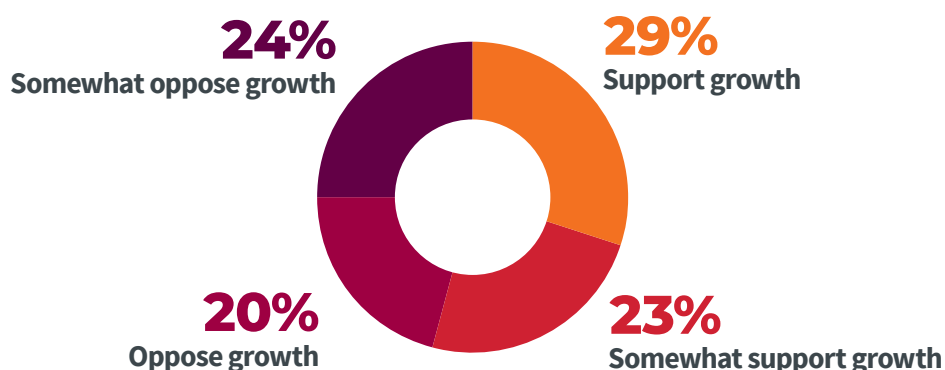
Two notable examples:

- Canadians across all demographics agree that Canada should export natural gas when framed as a way to displace emissions from coal abroad.<sup>68</sup>
- 73% of Canadians agree that if natural resource companies (like oil and gas, agriculture, forestry etc.) are “working toward fighting climate change, they should be encouraged to continue to grow” (25% “strongly”; 48% “somewhat” agree).<sup>69</sup>

## OIL & GAS: GROWTH OR DECLINE?

Canadians are evenly split when it comes to support for expansion in the oil and gas sector in the near term.<sup>70</sup>

### ATTITUDES TOWARDS GROWTH IN FOSSIL FUEL PRODUCTION



Source: Nanos 2020

### Canadians are evenly split over oil and gas expansion in the near term.

At the same time, half of the general public expects that the Canadian oil and gas industry will face a decline because of the global transition to clean energy<sup>71</sup> and just over half of actual voters in the last election said they would support “gradually decreasing production of oil and gas while transitioning workers.”<sup>72</sup>

The breakdowns are important on this issue: just 30% of voters “strongly” support a decrease in production. Another 27% “somewhat” support a gradual managed decline while 21% are strongly opposed.

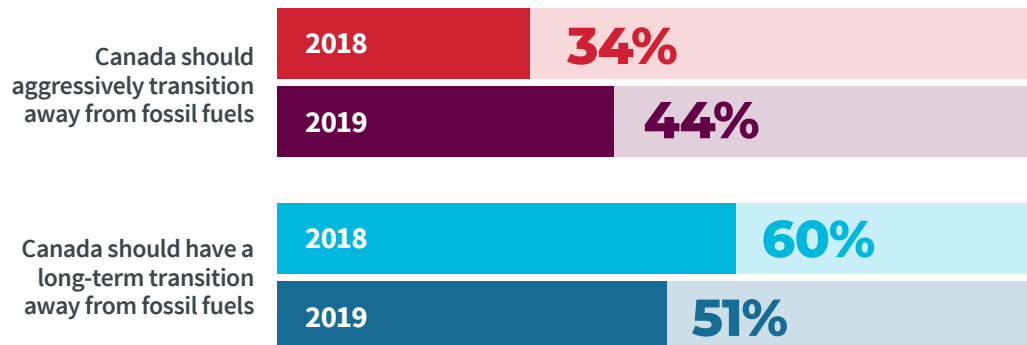
At least seven-in-ten Liberal, NDP, Green, and BQ voters said they would support decreasing oil production while transitioning workers (LPC 69%; NDP 73%; GPC 81%; BQ 81%). But the number is just 23% for Conservative voters.

The regional breakdowns track the general pattern: voters in Quebec are highly supportive (73%) of decreasing fossil production. Then there’s a big drop to the next highest number (British Columbians at 56%). Ontario is at 54%. Majorities of voters in Alberta (65%), Saskatchewan (61%), NFLD, NS and PEI are opposed.<sup>73</sup>

## TRENDS OVER TIME

There is evidence that Canadians’ support for a more aggressive transition is growing while support for the oil and gas sector is shrinking. Meanwhile there is declining support for the notion that better climate policy grants license to grow the industry.

## SUPPORT IS GROWING FOR AN AGGRESSIVE TRANSITION



Adapted from Nanos 2019

Note that there isn't enough publicly available tracking of these questions over time to be definitive. But the available data is echoed by proprietary findings, and points to a drop in support.

## DECLINING SUPPORT FOR GROWTH IN THE OIL AND GAS SECTOR

Support for growth in the oil and gas sector in Canada



Adapted from Nanos 2020

It is possible to be more supportive of fossil fuel development if Canada had "a more environmentally proactive climate change policy"



Adapted from Nanos 2020

## **SUPPORT FOR TRANSITION DEPENDS ON SPEED**

The question of speed of transition helps to explain some of the opinions that appear contradictory. Canadians are increasingly willing to support an “aggressive” transition away from fossil fuels. But most still want it to happen gradually.

Focus groups suggest that part of the issue actually has to do with how the words land with different audiences. People who want gradual change and those favouring transition are both thinking in terms of a decade or so: “most participants seem to consider rapid and incremental change similarly. When asked, participants leaning toward incremental change say Canada needs to start now and accelerate over the next five to 10 years.”<sup>74</sup>



# OBSTACLES TO ENGAGEMENT

It is important for communicators to understand that there are major barriers to engaging the “moveable middle” that are obscured by polls showing big numbers increasingly worried about climate change.

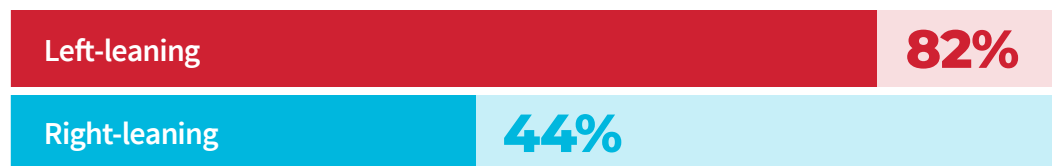
## Polarization

The most significant divide on climate is political identity. And the main driver of polarization appears to be leadership cues from within the conservative movement and Conservative Party. Researchers find that even ideology is less polarizing than political party affiliation.<sup>75</sup>

Conservative voters are operating very differently compared to other voting publics in Canada. During the recent surge in support, the proportion of Conservatives that prioritized climate didn’t change at all. The proportion among Liberal supporters tripled.<sup>76</sup>

Political polarization builds off underlying left-right divides on climate issues in Canada. Canadians on the left are 38 percentage points more likely than Canadians on the right to say climate change is a very serious problem.<sup>77</sup>

**“Climate change is a very serious problem.”**



Source: Pew 2020

And there is even a similar divide over the tangible question of whether climate change is having an impact where I live.

**“Climate change is affecting where I live.”**



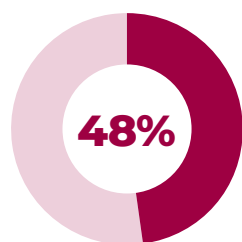
Source: Pew 2020

For a deeper dive into the attitudes of CPC voters and accessible voters, as well as the potential for a conservative embrace of climate policy, Clean Prosperity has surveys in western Canada and the suburban 905 region around Toronto.<sup>78</sup>

## Climate literacy

### LACK OF UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE PROBLEM AND SOLUTIONS

The Canadian public does not yet have a clear understanding of the causes of climate change or the solutions. And the situation is exacerbated in Canada because discussion about climate is tangled in debate about fossil fuel production.



**Only 48% of Canadians correctly identify carbon dioxide and other GHGs as the primary drivers of climate change.**

Source: Lakehead University, 2019

Only 48% of Canadians correctly identify carbon dioxide and other GHGs as the primary drivers of climate change.<sup>79</sup> And 43% score four out of ten (or lower) on a basic climate literacy quiz.

Even when prompted that scientists say fossil fuels are the problem, only 24% of Canadians say we need to move away from them “almost completely.”<sup>80</sup> Again, it’s important to look at strong views versus moderate ones — another 38% of Canadians think we need to reduce fossil fuel use “a lot.” So, an optimistic spin is that almost two-thirds of Canadians support a significant phase-out of fossil fuel use. But that’s an abstract proposition — when a specific situation comes up in the real world, the bulk of that support is not yet reliable.

Earlier in this report we saw that Canadians badly misunderstand our performance relative to other countries. Canadians think we're doing as well or better than the U.S. or other G7 nations, despite the fact that the U.S. and Japan have been reducing emissions and the European G7 countries have made very significant cuts. Canada is the only G7 country still polluting well above 1990 levels.

The lack of climate literacy among the large “moveable middle” is particularly obvious watching real people in focus groups. As *La Presse* described the findings of the Quebec *Baromètre* research, people are “bien intentionnés, mais mal informés [well intentioned, but poorly informed].”<sup>81</sup> Very few people can independently name any important climate policies, and they do not attribute climate change even to obvious things like gasoline vehicles. For most people, the conversation focuses on recycling, plastic straws, water conservation, and perhaps tree planting.<sup>82</sup>

## Efficacy

Canadians are not convinced that we can get climate change under control and this perspective has serious implications for building a constituency demanding more action. Averaging across several poll results, at best barely half of the public think it is ‘definitely’ or ‘probably’ possible to rein in climate change.

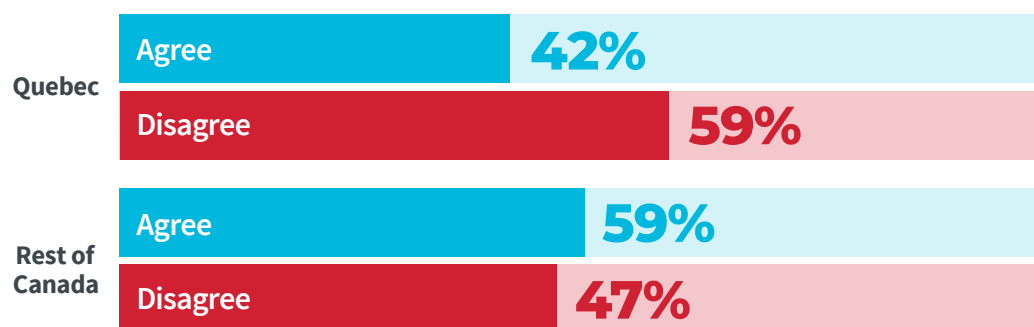
In one poll, only 16% of Canadians think it is “definitely possible” for the world to reach climate targets recommended by the IPCC (cutting GHGs in half by 2030 and reaching net zero by 2050). Another 37% say that it’s “probably possible.”<sup>83</sup>

As we saw earlier in this report, when the polling firm Ipsos asked about reaching net-zero in mid-century, just 32% of Canadians figured it was possible.

Overall, half of Canadians don’t think governments will be able to significantly reduce carbon emissions over the next decade. Although Quebecers are more optimistic.

### (IN)EFFICACY

**"Even if they try, governments won't be able to reduce carbon emissions significantly in the next decade."**



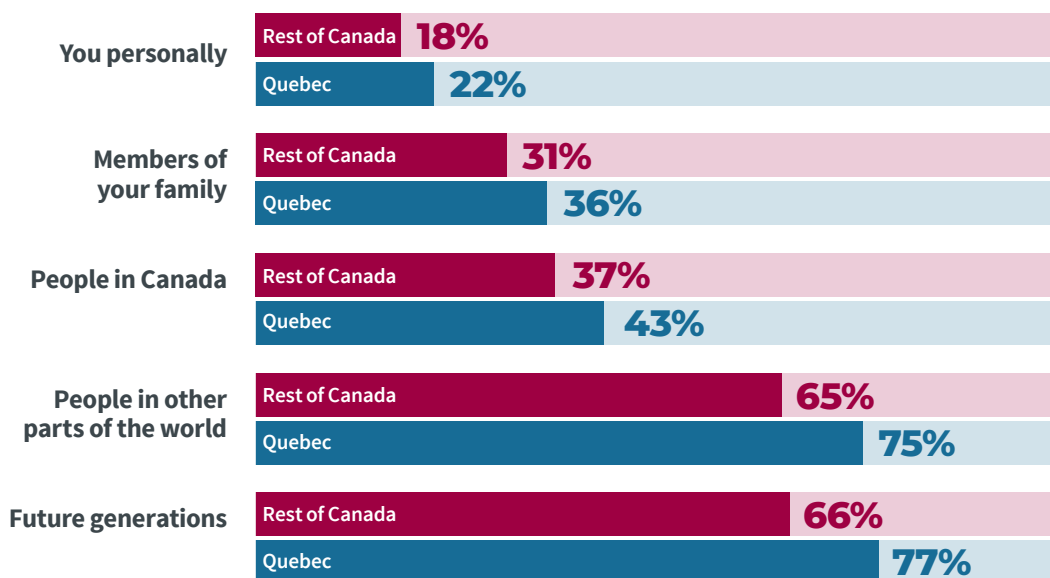
Adapted from Lachapelle, Erick. 2020 presentation to COPTICOM

So, it's not surprising that Canadians are split 60-40, where almost 40% think that we should focus on adapting instead of trying to stop climate change.<sup>84</sup>

## Psychological distance & proximity

Although Canadians increasingly understand climate change to be a “here and now” issue, it is still viewed as a much bigger problem for people in other countries and future generations. This perspective is common across developed countries in North America, Europe and Asia.<sup>85</sup>

### Q: How much will climate change affect [ ]... & greatly



Adapted from Lachapelle, Erick. 2020 presentation to COPTICOM

These findings underline the importance of emphasizing proximity, for example by highlighting extreme weather, health impacts and threats to your audience's home region.

# APPENDIX 1

## Communiquer sur les changements climatiques au Québec

### CONSEILS AUX COMMUNICATEURS

Mars 2021

#### Objet

Cette fiche met à jour – à partir de sondages récents - la série de conseils proposés par COPTICOM aux communicateurs.trices climatiques du Québec. Elle sert d’amorce à une discussion plus large au sein de la Communauté de pratique en communication climatique, en vue de développer une meilleure compréhension des enjeux, des objectifs et des messages généraux qui pourraient s’avérer utiles aux tactiques en communication climatique au Québec.

Les éléments principaux de cette fiche sont intégrés à un document pancanadien, le Public Opinion RollUp 2020, une méta-analyse des sondages publiés en 2020 à travers le Canada.

Les informations qui suivent s’inspirent, mais ne se limitent pas, d’enquêtes menées auprès des Québécois.es en matière de changements climatiques, dont le Baromètre de l’action climatique, produit par *Unpointcinq* et l’Université Laval. Elles visent à présenter un portrait général de l’état de l’opinion publique sur des enjeux généraux, laissant à d’autres instruments d’enquête le soin de creuser davantage des questions plus précises, comme la volonté de passer à l’action dans des domaines précis.

#### Observations tirées de la recherche

1. **La pandémie et la crise sanitaire ne semblent pas avoir entamé l’importance qu’accordent la très grande majorité des Québécois.es à l’impératif de contrer l’urgence climatique.**<sup>1</sup> De plus, une forte majorité de Québécois.es (62%) continue de croire que la protection de l’environnement doit primer, même si cela entraîne un ralentissement de l’activité économique ou des pertes d’emplois. D’ailleurs, une grande majorité rejette l’idée que l’environnement doit céder la place à l’économie étant donné la situation économique.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Selon le Baromètre de l’action climatique au Québec (décembre 2020, p.2), 79% des Québécois.es considèrent qu’il est urgent d’agir pour contrer les changements climatiques.

2 Voir Léger, juin 2020.

Un sondage Nanos (décembre 2020) révèle aussi que les Québécois.es (61,7%) sont les Canadiens.nes les plus convaincus.es que le moment actuel est propice à l'augmentation de mesures ambitieuses sur les changements climatiques.<sup>3</sup>

Dans un sondage Léger de juin dernier, **83% des Québécois.es ont souhaité que le gouvernement en fasse plus ou autant pour l'environnement et les changements climatiques** dans le contexte des mesures de relance et ce même en temps d'insécurité économique et de perte d'emplois, pour plusieurs.

**2. Un quasi-consensus social, mais avec un noyau inquiétant de « non-convaincus »**

» - La très grande majorité des Québécois.es (anglos et francos) n'ont pas à être convaincus.es de l'existence des changements climatiques, de ce qui les causent ou encore de l'urgence d'en faire plus. De manière générale, les jeunes et les femmes sont les plus convaincus.es et mobilisés.es.

Un bloc de 20-25% de Québécois.es semblent sensible à un certain discours climatosceptique en considérant que les changements climatiques sont « un mythe », que la science n'est pas encore tout à fait « claire », qu'on ne peut pas faire grand-chose, ou que ce n'est pas le moment d'agir parce que cela aurait des impacts sur l'économie. On retrouve ici une partie des Québécois.es « indifférents » (14%), inactifs (12%) ou inquiets (13%) identifiés dans le Baromètre 2020.<sup>4</sup> Les hommes, les résidents.es de la grande région de Québec et les électeurs.trices conservateurs.trices sont plus susceptibles de faire partie de de noyau de « non-convaincus.es ». L'expression « changements climatiques » pourrait possiblement devenir idéologiquement « toxique » pour une minorité de Québécois.es pour qui l'opposition à l'action sur les changements climatiques pourrait devenir une caractéristique identitaire.

**3. Le dilemme: parler 'd'environnement' ou de 'changements climatiques' ?** - La protection de l'environnement entraîne une adhésion légèrement plus forte que la lutte aux changements climatiques, notamment dans la région de Québec et chez les hommes hors Montréal et Québec.

**4. Les Québécois.es sont ambigus.es sur la question de l'urgence** – Bien que conscients de l'urgence, les Québécois.es – comme les autres Canadiens.nes – semblent privilégier une approche des petits pas, incrémentale, pour faire face aux changements climatiques, plutôt que des politiques « agressives ».

**5. La force de l'argument de l'équité intergénérationnelle** – Les Québécois.es adhèrent très volontiers aux arguments d'équité intergénérationnelle. Ils.elles sont conscients.es que les plus vieux n'en font pas assez pour protéger les jeunes

<sup>3</sup> Voir Nanos, décembre 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Tels que recensés et décrit dans la dernière édition du Baromètre de l'action climatique au Québec : <https://unpointcinq.ca/comprendre/profils-action-climatique-barometre/>

générations et une forte majorité se dit en accord avec les jeunes qu'il faut poser des gestes « radicaux ». Ces résultats semblent contredire l'idée que les Québécois.es privilégieraient l'approche des petits pas.

## **Crise climatique et pandémie – conseils spécifiques aux communicateurs.trices**

Dans le contexte actuel de pandémie, on peut communiquer sans gêne sur l'environnement et les changements climatiques, surtout en liant ces thèmes à la santé, la solidarité et la qualité de vie.

On peut insister fortement sur une relance verte et solidaire, et non pas un simple retour au tout-à-la-croissance comme avant, surtout en identifiant une 'nouvelle normale' à la reprise des interactions sociales.

On peut contrer sans problème les arguments de ceux et celles qui feraient primer l'économie sur l'environnement, tout en montrant qu'une économie verte et solidaire rassemble tout le monde.

## **Suggestions d'objectifs de communication 2021**

A. **Objectifs principaux** – Dans un contexte de crise climatique, trois objectifs principaux :

1. **Communiquer le fait que les Québécois.es sont encore plus convaincus.es de l'importance de contrer les changements climatiques**

Utiliser le 'nous' (p.ex. 'nous, au Québec', 'nous, les Québécois.es') et renforcer le consensus climatique (p.ex. 'nous sommes le peuple, la société, le plus mobilisé au monde sur les questions climatiques')

2. **Communiquer que le moment est propice pour être encore plus ambitieux – collectivement – dans nos actions (gouvernementales, entreprises, personnelles) pour diminuer les émissions**

Utiliser des arguments de renforcement positif (p.ex. nous sommes en mouvements et nous posons des gestes importants et la situation nous impose d'en faire davantage)

Encourager les individus, les collectivités, les entreprises et les gouvernements à poser des gestes supplémentaires plus ambitieux et souligner positivement celles et ceux qui le font.

3. **Déployer des efforts de communications visant spécifiquement le noyau dur de Québécois.es 'non convaincus.es', en parallèle avec les messages conçus pour la population en général**

De manière générale, aucune campagne de communication climatique n'a encore visé les segments plus réfractaires. Le déploiement de telles

campagnes devrait se faire à travers des canaux de communications spécifiques et pertinents à ces segments et ne doit pas ‘contaminer’ les messages généraux destinés à la population québécoise en général.

## Éléments de tactiques possibles

- A. Pour porter le discours de l’urgence, **les jeunes, les scientifiques et les leaders non directement associés.es à l’environnement sont les meilleurs.es porte-parole** - notamment ceux et celles qui ne sont pas perçus.es comme faisant partis de groupes écologistes et qui ne sont pas associés.es à des gestes d’éclat. Une place importante devrait aussi être donnée à des porte-parole auxquels.les les Québécois.es plus réfractaires (p.ex. les citoyen.nes hors-Montréal, principalement les hommes), s’identifient.

La moitié des Québécois.es (49%) trouve les écologistes « trop extrémistes », ce qui nuit à la capacité des écologistes de faire des gains auprès de segments plus prudents de la société. De jeunes porte-parole, perçus.es par ces segments comme « nos jeunes » (par exemple, ses propres enfants), sont plus susceptibles de les convaincre de l’existence d’une crise climatique et environnementale et de l’urgence de poser des gestes conséquents.

- B. Les communications doivent interpeller simultanément l’impératif d’agir pour **sauver l’environnement ET contrer les changements climatiques**.
- C. **La communication doit mettre de l’avant le leadership, la sincérité et la détermination**. Les Québécois.es, et notamment les plus prudents, doivent pouvoir adhérer à un discours et à des porte-parole qui sont solides dans l’adversité et qui projettent une image d’ordre, de compétence et de contrôle.

## Proposition de messages-clés généraux 2021

**Message 1 – Le maintien et l’approfondissement du fort consensus québécois :** On s’entend au Québec : l’environnement se dégrade et les changements climatiques sont aujourd’hui une crise dont il faut s’occuper de toute urgence. C’est notre avenir qui est en jeu, et en particulier celui de nos jeunes.

**Message 2 – La situation se dégrade et on attend de nos gouvernements qu’ils posent des gestes forts.** Les actions actuelles ne sont pas suffisantes.

**Message 3 – Notre sortie de la pandémie doit nous donner les moyens de relever les autres défis auxquels nous sommes confrontés – celle des inégalités et celle des changements climatiques.**

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