

Balancing act: Majorities say both climate action, oil & gas growth should be top priorities for next government

Division remains over federal carbon tax, but most want to do more to meet 2030 emission reduction goal

September 5, 2019 – It is a debate often styled as “either or”. Either the federal government commits to policies aimed at reducing carbon emissions in order to meet international obligations to battle the effects of climate change or it focuses on growing Canada's natural resource sector. But against the backdrop of a putative federal election call, Canadians are indicating they see the conversation not as “either or”, but “both, and”.

With both issues top of mind among [persuadable voters](#), attention is turning to party platforms and expectations for the next government.

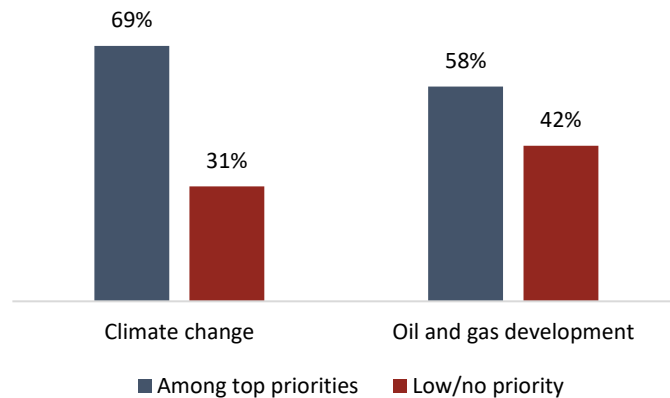
A new study from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds seven-in-ten Canadians (69%) say climate change should be a top priority for whichever party forms government after the October vote, including four-in-ten Conservative Party supporters.

At the same time, six-in-ten (58%) say that oil and gas development should be a top priority alongside climate action.

While different Canadians may lean further to one side of the “economy-versus-environment” discussion, in most cases this does not mean they'd ignore the other side completely. Among those who said the next federal government should prioritize climate change efforts, three-quarters (75%) want at least some investment in the oil and gas sector. And among those who say the energy industry should have the next government's main focus, four-in-five (80%) would still wish to see at least some investment in climate change efforts.

Asked which party is best to lead Canada on the climate issue, the Conservative Party, bolstered by its own loyal vote base, is viewed as best by 25 per cent. About the same number give the advantage to the Green Party (23%), while others are divided between the incumbent Liberals (18%), the New Democrats (10%) and uncertainty (18%).

How should the next federal government, whichever party it may be, approach each...



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from August 21 - 26 among a representative randomized sample of 1,534 Canadian adults who are members of [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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More Key Findings:

- Action on climate change is seen as a top priority for the next federal government by more than seven-in-ten women of all age groups. Seven-in-ten young men (73%) say the same, while this priority falls below six-in-ten for men over the age of 35.
- While 86 per cent of leaning and decided CPC voters oppose the federal carbon tax, the centre-left parties support it by a wide margin. At least 71 per cent of Green, NDP and Liberal voters support the carbon pricing program.
- Three-quarters of Canadians (76%) say that the federal government, whichever party it may be after October 21, should follow through with the plan to ban single-use plastics by 2021. The policy enjoys majority support across all four major federal parties

About ARI

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

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Part 1: Climate change a top election issue

In the Angus Reid Institute's polling program leading up to the 43rd federal election this October, one issue has emerged as unique to this election – climate change. That issue has consistently taken top spot in 2019, which is a marked change from the previous election.

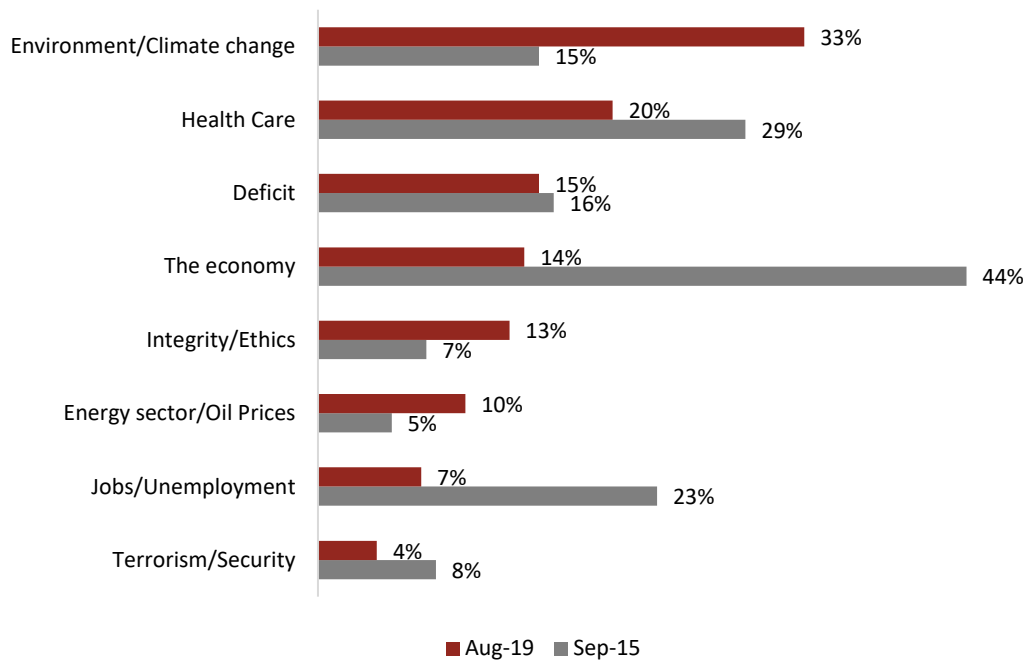
[Related: Top issues for pliable voters](#)

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Consider polling done in [September 2015](#) versus the most recent data. In 2015, 44 per cent of Canadians chose the economy as their top issue, more than three times the number who do now (14%). Now, one-in-three (33%) say climate change is among their top issues, more than double who said this in 2015:

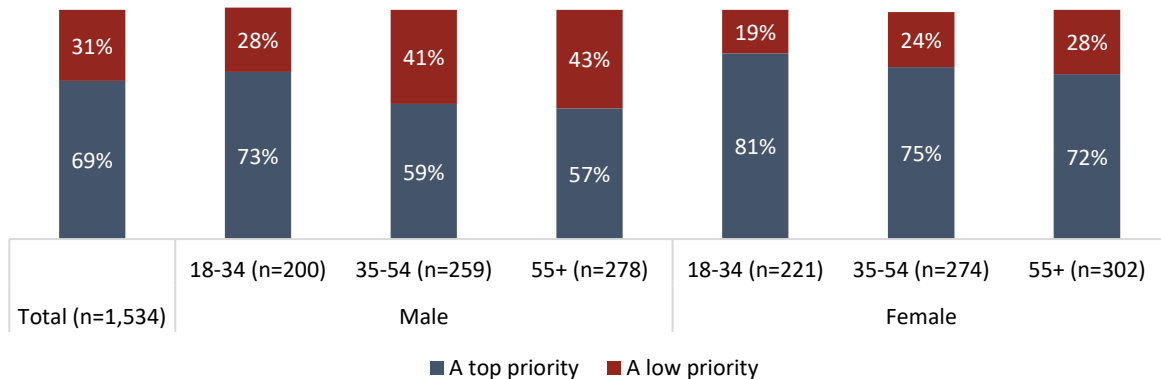
Top issue facing the country (respondent chooses up to two)



Seven-in-ten say climate a top priority for next govt.

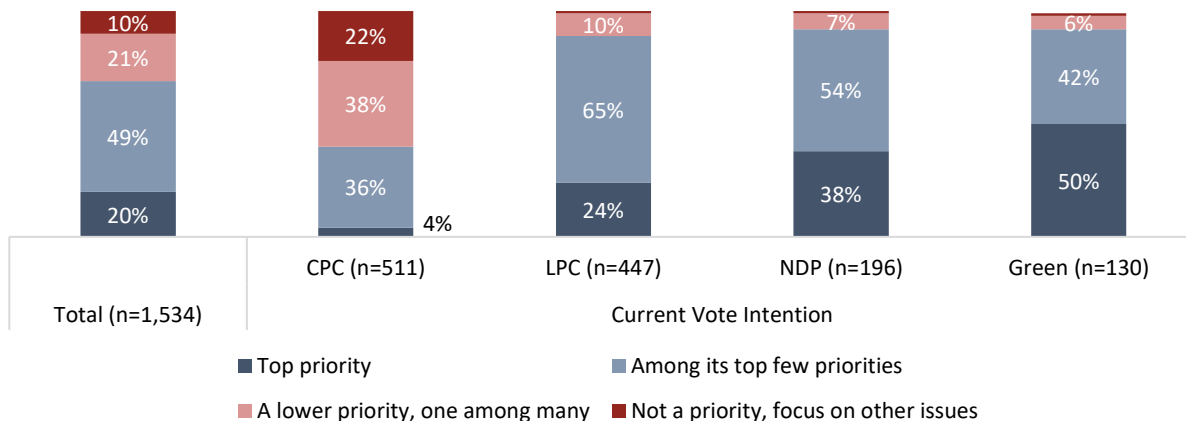
With this in mind, the Angus Reid Institute asked Canadians how much of a priority they believe climate change should be for the next federal government, regardless of which party wins in October. Seven-in-ten say it should be among the top priorities for whomever is setting the next legislative agenda. Notably, a majority of all age groups say this, rising to eight-in-ten (81%) among young women.

Generally speaking, how do you believe the next federal government (regardless of which party wins this upcoming election) should approach the issue of climate change?



The priority of this issue is varied across the political spectrum. Potential Green say it should be *the* top priority for the next government, while Liberal and NDP supporters say it should be *among* the top priorities. Notably, a significant number of Conservative leaners say they consider climate change to be a top issue too.

And regardless of which party wins the election this fall how do you believe Canada's next federal government should approach the issue of climate change? (Vote intent August 26)



Tension between climate and resource development

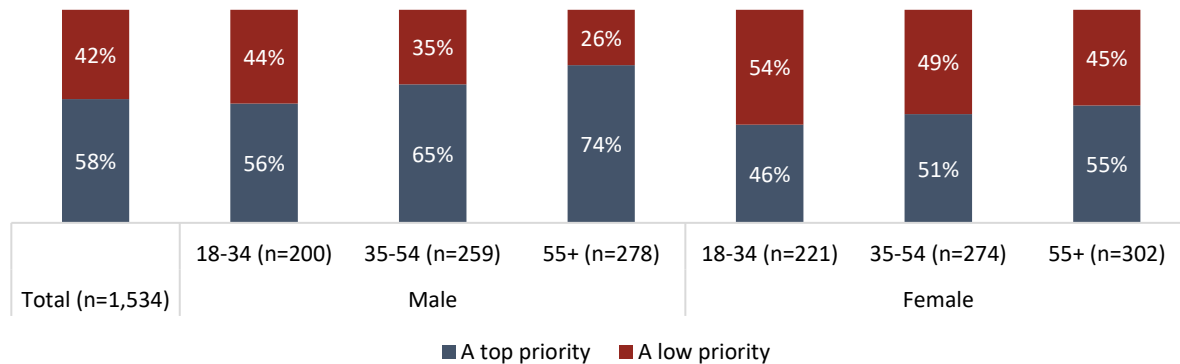
Politics, however, is rarely so simple. Asked the same question about the continuing development of Canada's oil and gas sector, six-in-ten residents also say that issue should be a top priority for the next

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government. Men are more supportive of prioritizing this area of the nation's economy than women, but considerable portions of all age and gender groups agree that this is an important area of focus:

Generally speaking, how do you believe the next federal government (regardless of which party wins this upcoming election) should treat oil and gas sector development?

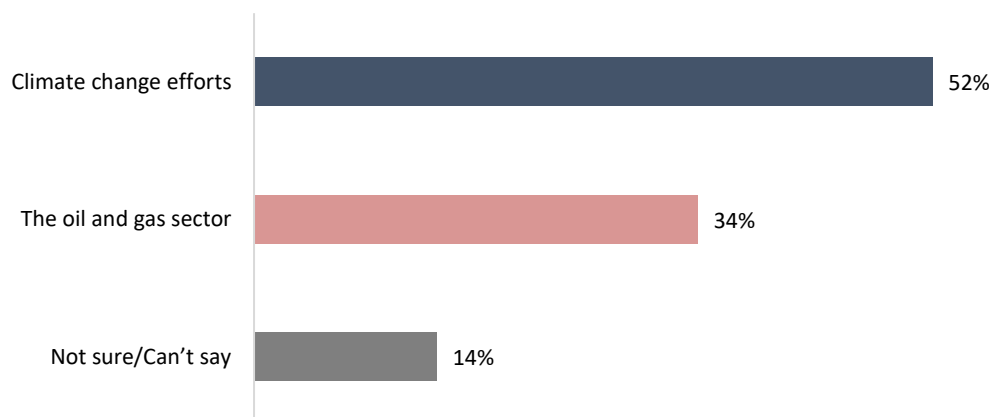


Therein lies the seemingly perpetual tension in Canada's political landscape. Canadians desire action on climate change alongside growth in the nation's oil and gas sector. The Prime Minister has faced criticism from some for maintaining this position and calling for climate action while promoting growth in the energy sector.

Where should the next government focus efforts?

Climate change does, however, emerge as the main focus when respondents are offered a more limited face-off. Asked which of these areas should be a bigger priority over the next decade, half choose climate change action:

Which do you believe should be the bigger priority overall for Canada for the next five to ten years:



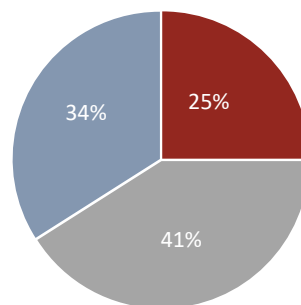
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Very few would ignore each issue entirely

As noted, while Canadians may prefer one side of the economy versus environment debate, in most cases this does not mean they ignore the other side. Among those who said they would prioritize climate change efforts, just one-quarter say they would prefer oil and gas not receive any attention or investment at all. Indeed, fully one-in-three (34%) who put climate action first still say the energy sector should receive considerable investment:

**What would be your preferred overall approach to the oil and gas sector then?
Asked of those who would focus on Climate Change, n = 801**

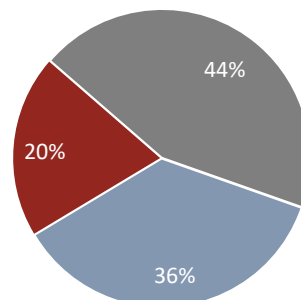


- No federal government attention or investment in oil and gas at all
- Some attention and investment, but not a lot
- Still quite a bit of attention and investment, but just not quite as much as climate change efforts

Similarly, when those who prioritize oil and gas sector development are asked what they would do about climate change efforts, 36 per cent say they would invest in that area as well:

**What would be your preferred overall approach to climate change effort
be then?**

Asked of those who would focus on oil and gas, n = 520



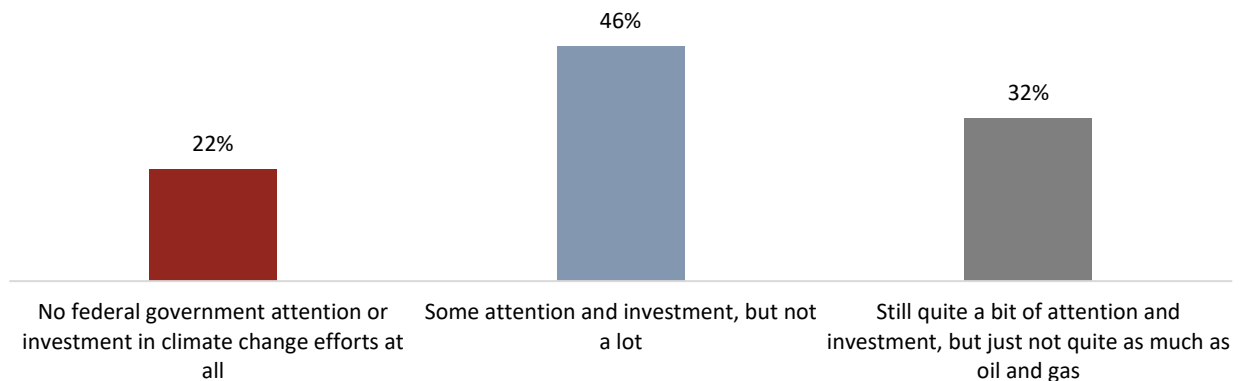
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It would appear then, that even those most ambivalent about climate change action, that is, leaning and decided CPC voters, are open to action on this file, so long as it does not supersede the focus on oil and gas. Just one-in-five Conservative supporters (22%) would ignore climate change altogether:

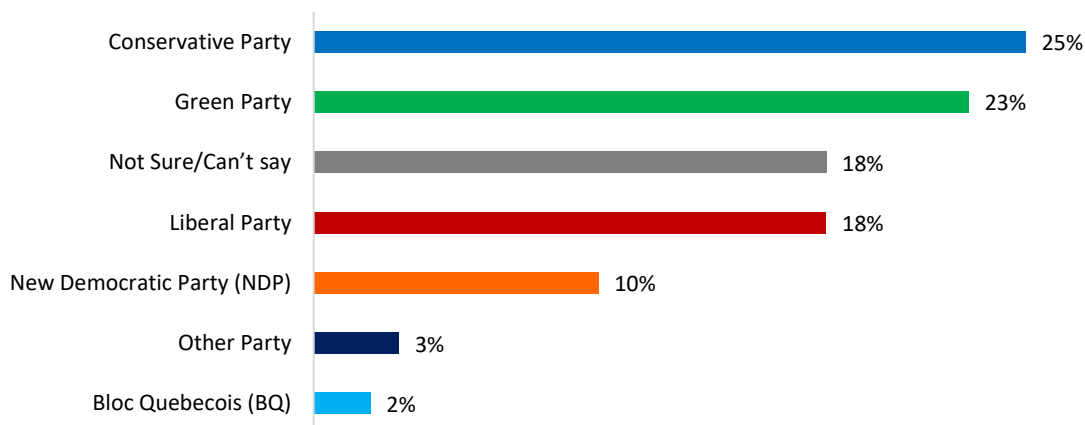
**What would be your preferred overall approach to climate change effort be then?
Asked of those who say "focus on oil & gas"
AND plan to vote CPC as of Aug 26, 2019 (n=348*)**



Division over which party is best to lead on each

Climate change is a relatively uncontroversial priority for most Canadians, but that doesn't mean they agree on which party is best to implement policy. Perhaps owing to the tension between natural resource growth and climate obligations, the same number of Canadians say that both the CPC (25%) and the Green Party (23%), two parties with vastly differing approaches to the issue, would be best to lead Canada on climate change. Slightly fewer (18%) say the Liberals are best to continue forth with the plan they have implemented, while one-in-five (18%) also say that they're uncertain which party would be best.

Suppose the top issue on your mind is climate change. In that case, which party's candidate in your riding would you yourself be most likely to vote for?

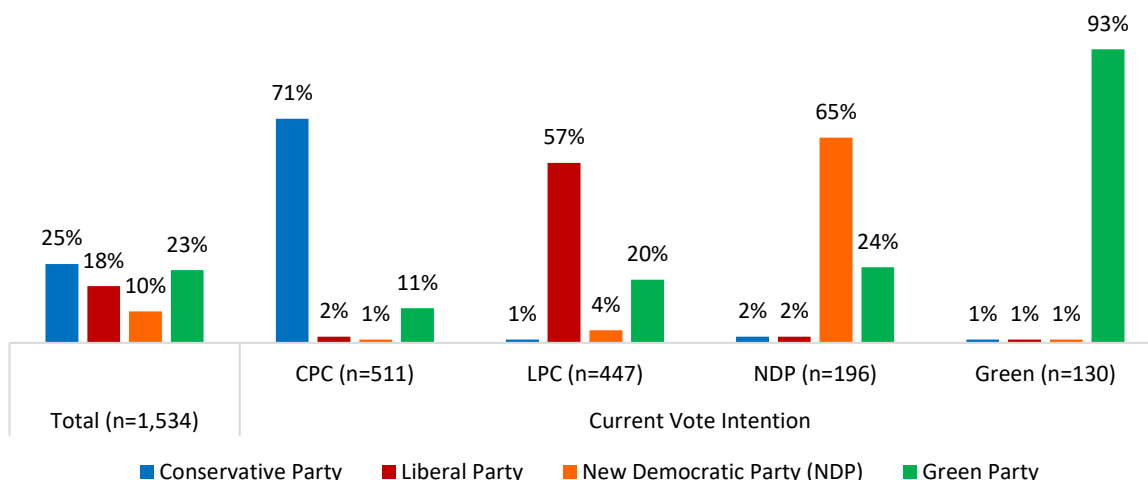


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Among those who say they will vote Conservative in October, 71 per cent say that party is their top choice to handle climate change. Meanwhile, 93 per cent of Green supporters say the same of their party. Notably, one-in-five Liberals and New Democrats say the Green Party would be best, which draws away from their own support base:

Suppose the top issue on your mind is climate change. In that case, which party's candidate in your riding would you yourself be most likely to vote for?



Part 2: Assessing current policies and future plans

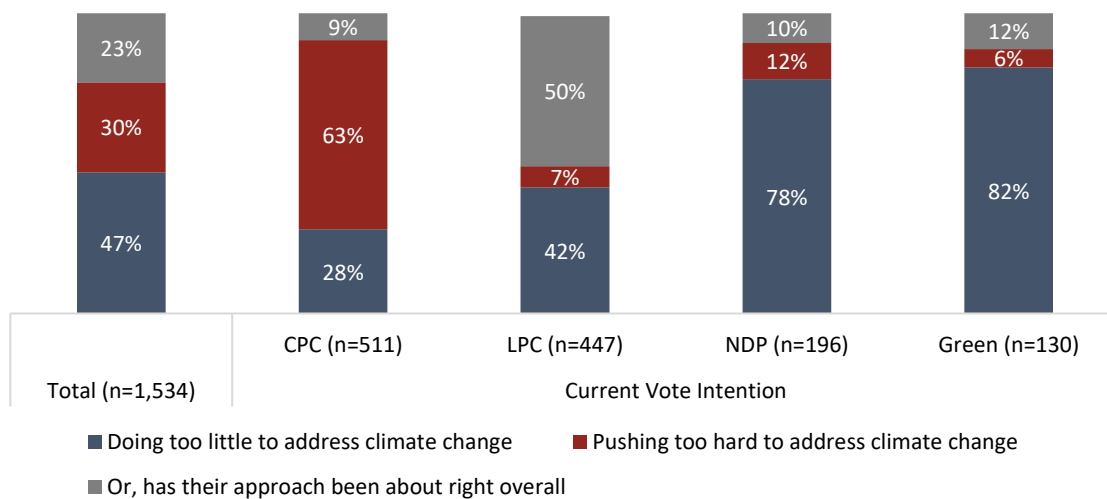
The next government faces a complex policy environment. Canada's natural resource sector commands attention, as do international emissions obligations and changing expectations from constituents.

Too much or too little action?

The federal Liberal government under Justin Trudeau has attempted to walk the line between environmentalism and economic growth. Trudeau has noted repeatedly that a balance is the best path forward for Canada, but it appears Canadians have a more unbalanced opinion.

Half (47%) say that Trudeau has not done enough to address climate change, led primarily by NDP (78%) and Green (82%) supporters. Half of those who plan to support his party in this election say he has found the right approach, but a significant segment say he should do more. Meanwhile, most Conservative supporters say Trudeau has been pushing too hard on the issue:

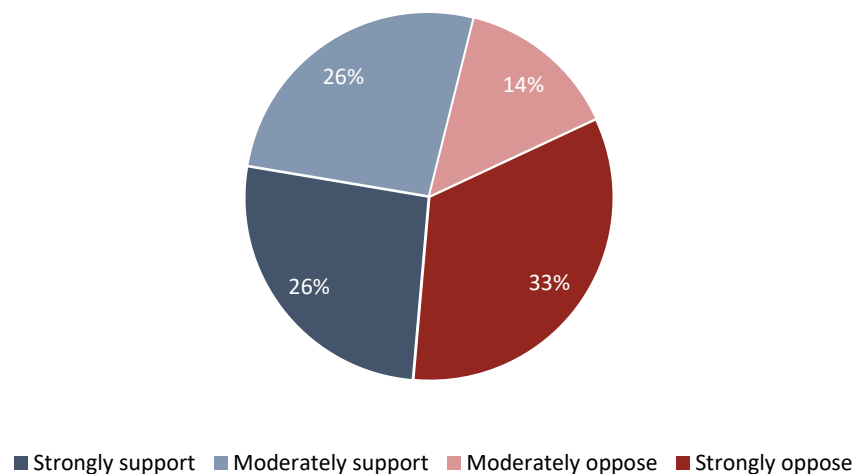
**And when you think about the Liberal government’s record under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on climate change, would you say it has been:
(Vote intent August 26)**



Regional and age cleavages over carbon tax support

The signature environmental policy of the Liberal government is undoubtedly its carbon pricing program, implemented in any jurisdiction that did not have its own adequate program in place. This has led to court battles with provincial governments, including in Ontario under Premier Doug Ford. The carbon tax has been, and continues to be, divisive: half of Canadians say they support it, while half oppose:

Support versus Oppose - federal carbon tax



Quebec residents are most supportive (66% support), while Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba are most opposed. B.C., Ontario and Atlantic Canada all mirror the national average, with half on each side of the debate:

| Based on whatever you've seen or heard about the federal government's carbon tax, including in this survey, do you support or oppose it? | | | | | | | |
|--|------------------|---------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| | Total (1,534) | Region | | | | | |
| | | BC (n=214) | AB (n=159) | SK/MB (n=205) | ON (n=476) | QC (n=352) | ATL (n=158) |
| Strongly Support | 26% | 22% | 21% | 22% | 29% | 29% | 19% |
| Support | 26% | 30% | 12% | 18% | 22% | 37% | 28% |
| Oppose | 14% | 21% | 13% | 14% | 13% | 14% | 15% |
| Strongly Oppose | 33% | 27% | 55% | 46% | 35% | 20% | 37% |

Digging deeper, it becomes apparent that most of the opposition to the carbon tax comes from those who are planning to support the Conservative Party in the October general election. Nearly nine-in-ten (86%) CPC supporters oppose the policy, while at least two-thirds of supporters from all three centre-left parties support it:

| Based on whatever you've seen or heard about the federal government's carbon tax, including in this survey, do you support or oppose it? | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| | Total (1,534) | Male | | | Female | | | Current Vote Intention (August 26) | | | |
| | | 18-34 (n=200) | 35-54 (n=259) | 55+ (n=278) | 18-34 (n=221) | 35-54 (n=274) | 55+ (n=302) | CPC (n=511) | LPC (n=447) | NDP (n=196) | Green (n=130) |
| Strongly Support | 26% | 34% | 31% | 19% | 30% | 24% | 22% | 3% | 50% | 39% | 41% |
| Support | 26% | 18% | 12% | 18% | 38% | 38% | 31% | 11% | 34% | 37% | 30% |
| Oppose | 14% | 12% | 9% | 15% | 21% | 16% | 14% | 16% | 11% | 11% | 17% |
| Strongly Oppose | 33% | 36% | 48% | 48% | 11% | 22% | 33% | 70% | 5% | 13% | 13% |

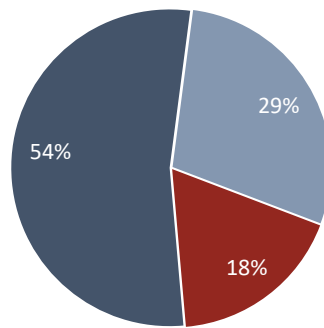
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Most want more action to meet Paris emission targets

While the carbon tax is cause for division, the sentiment that Canada should cut its emissions carries more unity. Slightly more than half (54%) say that Canada should increase its efforts to meet the targets set out at the [Paris Climate Accord in 2015](#). Meeting these targets would see Canada reducing emissions to 30 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. Another three-in-ten say that current efforts should continue, even if it means falling short. Canada is [projected to fall short](#) of its goals, though Environment Minister Catherine McKenna [remains steadfast](#) that the country will get there. Just one-in-five say Canada should not be concerned about its commitments:

Regardless of who wins the coming federal election, what would you say Canada should do:



- Increase efforts to make sure we reach the Paris target for 2030
- Continue on the current course even if it means falling short
- Decrease efforts and don't worry about the 2030 target

Opposition to Canada's 2030 targets comes primarily from men over the age of 34, while women of all ages and young men are enthusiastic about efforts to increase efforts. Again, the highest levels of opposition come from those who will support the CPC in the coming election:

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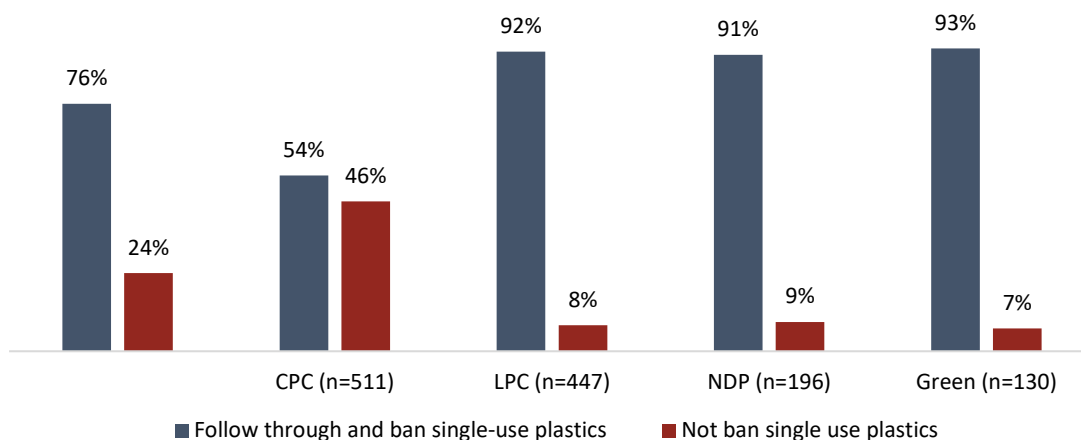
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|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| | Total (1,534) | Male | | | Female | | | Current Vote Intention (August 26) | | | |
| | | 18-34 (n=200) | 35-54 (n=259) | 55+ (n=278) | 18-34 (n=221) | 35-54 (n=274) | 55+ (n=302) | CPC (n=511) | LPC (n=447) | NDP (n=196) | Green (n=130) |
| Increase efforts to make sure we reach the Paris target for 2030 | 54% | 59% | 47% | 33% | 69% | 64% | 56% | 20% | 73% | 81% | 85% |
| Continue on the current course even if it means falling short | 29% | 25% | 24% | 41% | 25% | 25% | 29% | 40% | 25% | 15% | 13% |
| Decrease efforts and don't worry about the 2030 target | 18% | 16% | 29% | 26% | 6% | 10% | 16% | 40% | 2% | 3% | 2% |

Three-quarters say next govt. should implement single-use plastics ban

Another policy in the formative stages is a potential ban on single-use plastics, which would be implemented as early as 2021. Products included are not yet defined but are expected to include grocery bags, straws and stir sticks, cutlery and plates.

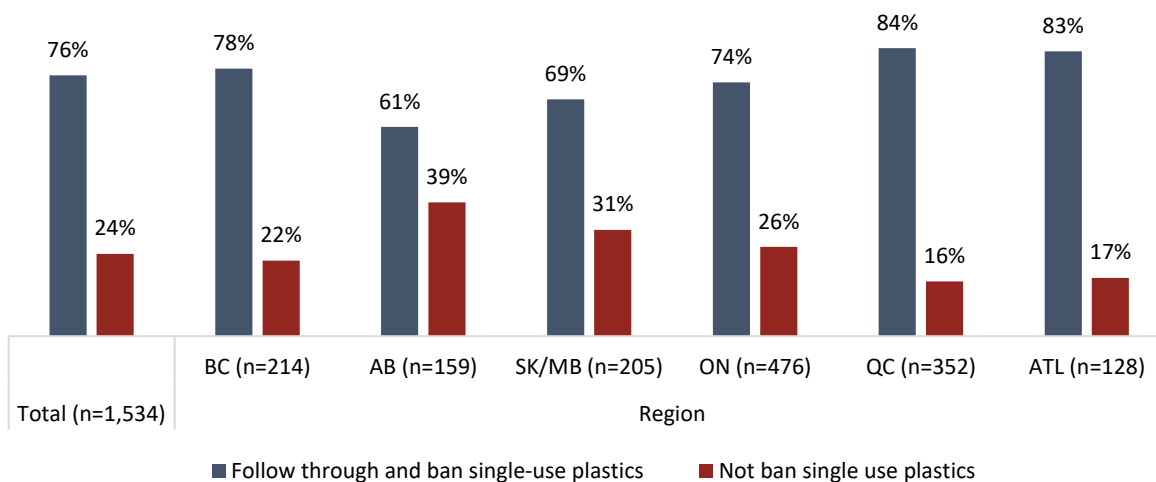
Three-quarters of Canadians, including more than half of Conservatives are supportive of this policy:

In your opinion, should the next Canadian government elected this fall:



A ban on single-use plastics is also supported by at least six-in-ten residents in every region of the country:

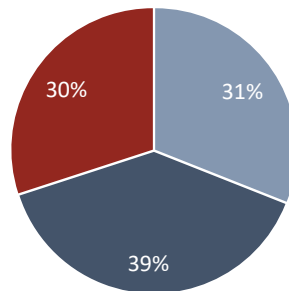
In your opinion, should the next Canadian government elected this fall:



Seven-in-ten support electric vehicle incentive

As of May 1, 2019, any Canadian consumer is eligible for a rebate of up to \$5,000 if they lease or purchase a [qualifying zero-emission](#) vehicle. Government policy in this area appears to be quite popular with Canadians. Three-in-ten say the next federal government should continue with this incentive as it is, while four-in-ten (39%) would in fact, increase it:

Regardless of which party is elected in October, do you think the next federal government should maintain, discontinue or expand this program?



- Maintain – keep the \$5,000 rebate in place
- Expand – provide more federal incentives for electric vehicle purchases
- Discontinue – cancel the \$5,000 rebate

Overall, three-in-ten (30%) say that they would like to see this program ended, led by men over 55 (45%) and those leaning toward the CPC in the next election (58%). Half of voters for the other three parties would expand incentives:

Regardless of which party is elected in October, do you think the next federal government should maintain, discontinue or expand this program?

| | Total (1,534) | Male | | | Female | | | Current Vote Intention (August 26) | | | |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| | | 18-34 (n=200) | 35-54 (n=259) | 55+ (n=278) | 18-34 (n=221) | 35-54 (n=274) | 55+ (n=302) | CPC (n=511) | LPC (n=447) | NDP (n=196) | Green (n=130) |
| Maintain – keep the \$5,000 rebate in place | 31% | 30% | 22% | 27% | 39% | 32% | 37% | 23% | 36% | 37% | 34% |
| Expand – provide more federal incentives for electric vehicle purchases | 39% | 50% | 44% | 29% | 48% | 42% | 29% | 19% | 51% | 53% | 57% |
| Discontinue – cancel the \$5,000 rebate | 30% | 20% | 34% | 45% | 13% | 26% | 34% | 58% | 12% | 10% | 10% |

For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).