

Energy Policy: Canadians' priorities shift from environment to economic growth and domestic capacity

Percentage of Canadians who believe energy policy should prioritize economic growth doubles from 2023

February 13, 2025 – The return of U.S. President Donald Trump to the Oval Office, and his threat of widespread tariffs, has seismically shifted the economic landscape. It has also threatened to upend energy development in both the long- and short-term.

New data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds that Canadians' own priorities when it comes to energy policy may be shifting alongside these seismic waves. Compared to 18 months ago, Canadians are nearly twice as likely to emphasize economic growth as a key factor to deciding energy policy. In August 2023, one-quarter (23%) said this, while more than two-in-five (43%) say this now.

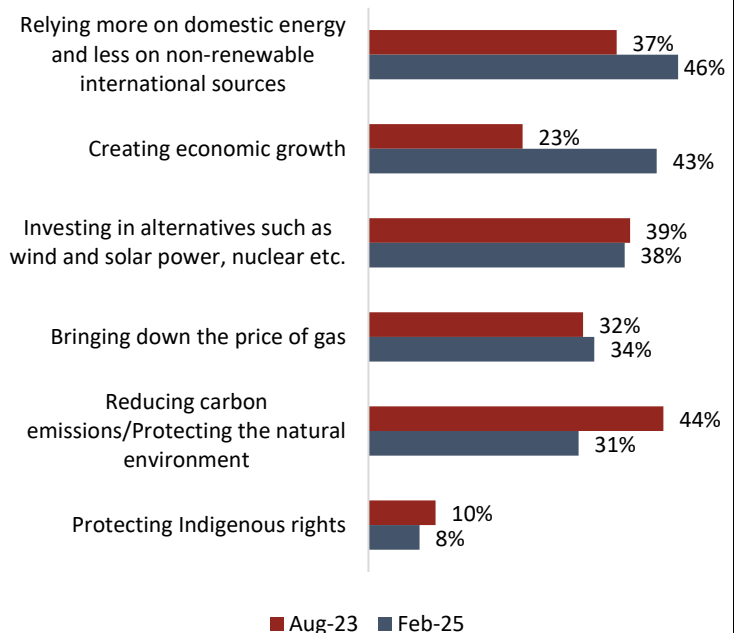
There has been a corresponding decline in importance of environmental concerns in energy policy, which had been the top choice (44%) for Canadians in 2023, and now (31%) falls behind decreasing reliance on international sources of energy (46%), economic growth (43%), investing in alternatives (38%) and bringing down the price of gas (34%).

While the balance between economic development and environmental protection appears to have shifted, renewable energy sources are still much more popular across political and regional divides than hydrocarbons.

The further development of hydroelectric sources receives the highest support from Canadians (88%), followed by solar (77%), wind (72%) and nuclear power (63%). Natural gas (61%) and crude oil (51%) receive less, but still majority support.

A majority in every region give a thumbs-up to further expansion of the three renewables (solar, wind, hydro). Nuclear is supported by a majority in all regions except Quebec, where fewer than two-in-five (36%) believe further nuclear power should be developed.

When you think about energy policy in Canada, which of these is most important to you? (Up to two chosen; all respondents, n=2,012)



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from Jan. 24-27, 2025 among a representative randomized sample of 2,012 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 +/- 1.5 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:

- The Angus Reid Institute's Energy Perspectives Index finds 18 per cent of Canadians prefer to focus on hydrocarbon sources, while 33 per cent lean that way. There are 19 per cent who would prefer the focus is entirely on renewable energy, while 30 per cent lean that way.
- Support for the expansion of wind (72%) and solar (77%) is still high but has declined by five and seven points, respectively, from 2021.
- Meanwhile, support for more nuclear power has increased by 12 points from 2021 (51% to 63%) and is double the level seen in the 1980s and early '90s.

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.*

INDEX

Part One: Energy Perspectives in 2025

Part Two: Shifting energy policy priorities

Part Three: Energy expansion preferences

- **Hydro, nuclear popular across Energy Perspectives**
- **Nuclear support low in Quebec**

Part One: Energy Perspectives in 2025

Energy and resource extraction is always a big topic in Canada. That conversation took a dip in precedence after the COVID-19 pandemic but trade threats from American President Donald Trump have elevated this issue even more so in 2025. With tariffs possible on oil and gas and other Canadian products, many in Canada are turning to look at domestic production to strengthen the nation's internal capacity to provide power and fuel.

To help better understand perspectives on this issue, the Angus Reid Institute created an [Energy Perspectives Index \(EPI\)](#). This EPI is based on positive and negative scoring across a host of questions about expanding various energy sources, as well as statements about Canada's priorities in this sector going forward.

Canadians are divided into four groups, each of a substantial size, on the EPI. These are the Carbon Keepers, Renewable Skeptics, Reduce and Transition, and Keep it in the Ground. All four groups are supportive of hydroelectric energy, Canada's largest source of electricity and a source of export.

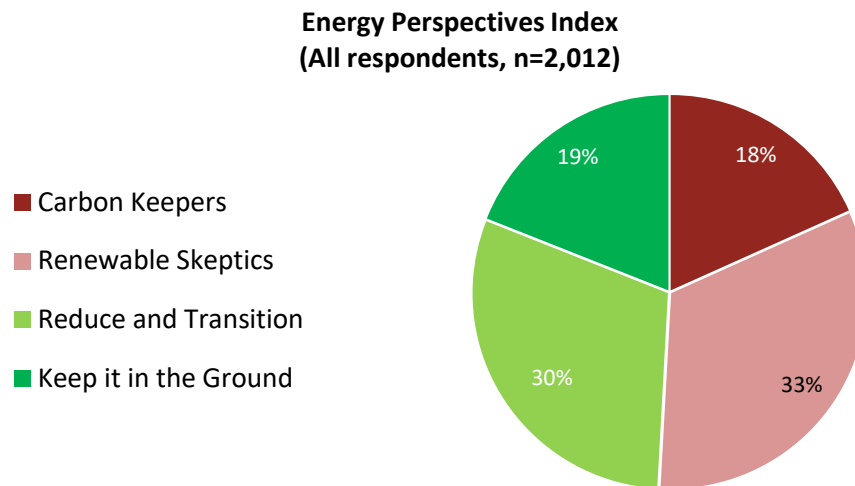
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Those most opposed to each other are two groups each representing approximately one-in-five Canadians – the Carbon Keepers and Keep it in the Ground perspectives. As one might anticipate from their names, each has strong views about expanding renewable and non-renewable energy sources. The Carbon Keepers are near unanimous in support for expanding everything from coal to natural gas, to crude oil and nuclear, but show little interest in solar and wind. The inverse is true of the latter.

Three-in-five Canadians comprise the middle portions of the EPI, divided close to evenly between the “Renewable Skeptics” (33%) and the “Reduce and Transition” (30%):



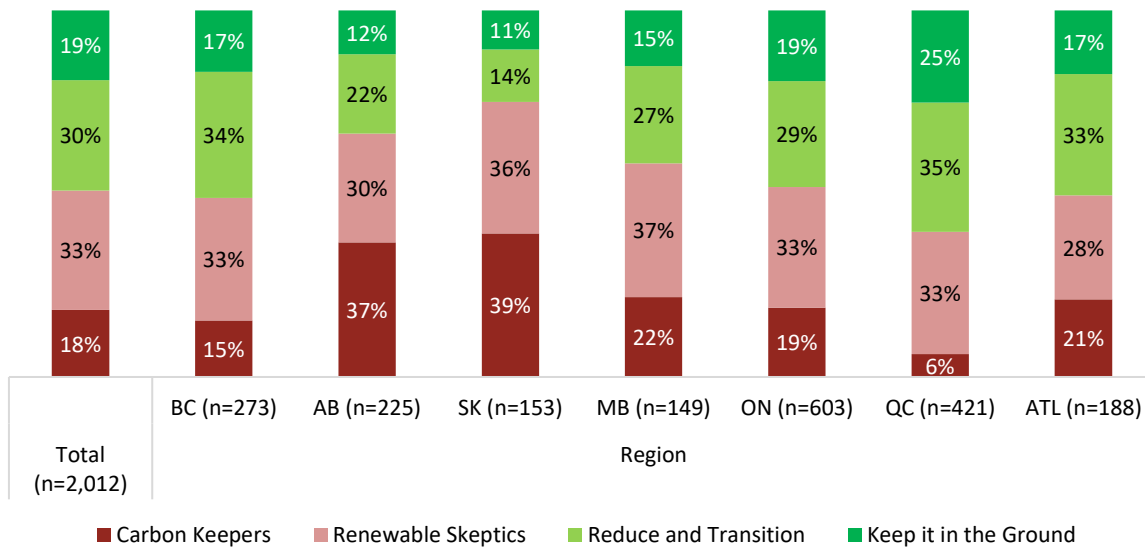
Each perspective is found in every region of the country, with some more concentrated than others. In Alberta and Saskatchewan, for example, a plurality in each province are Carbon Keepers, with the second largest group being the Renewable Skeptics. Quebec leads the nation in both Reduce and Transition and Keep it in the Ground perspectives:

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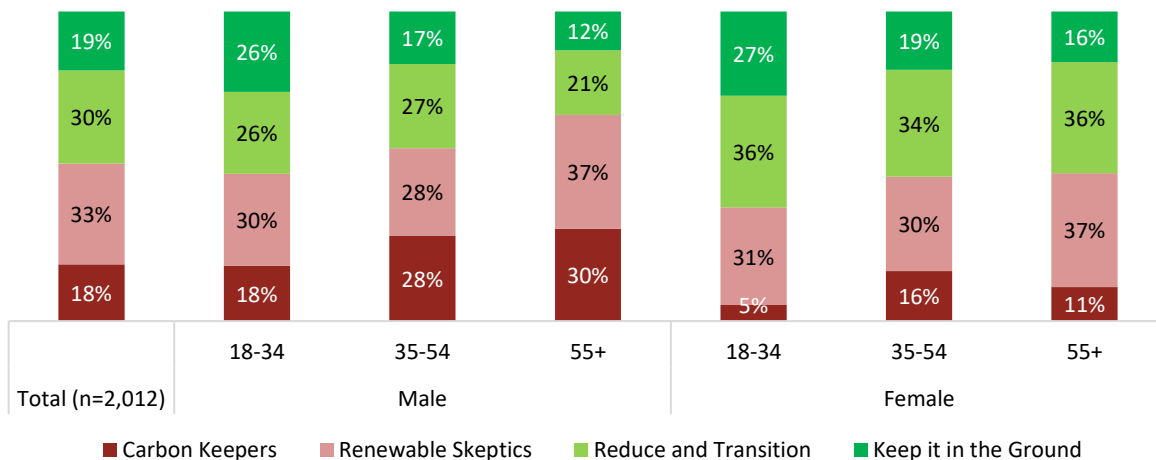
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Energy Perspectives Index



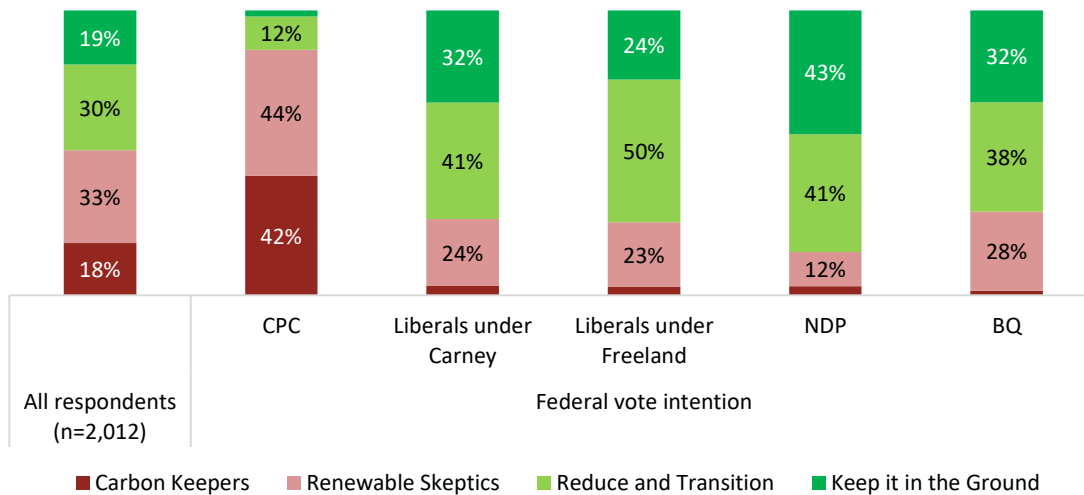
The more renewable supporting groups are more likely to be women than men across all ages, with massive division between men and women over the age of 54:

Energy Perspectives Index



As we look ahead to the Liberal leadership vote in March, it is notable that both those who would support the party under Mark Carney and Chrystia Freeland lean heavily toward pushing for renewable investment, while Conservative voters are vastly more likely to want to expand oil and gas, coal, and natural gas production. Both Carney and Freeland have signaled that they would eliminate the federal carbon tax, suggesting potential tension within their voting base:

Energy Perspectives Index



Part Two: Shifting energy policy priorities

The threat of tariffs from Trump has no doubt altered the economic calculus in Canada. The free and close trading relationship between Canada and the United States, and the economic benefits it provided, can no longer be guaranteed. [Earlier this month](#), the Angus Reid Institute reported that nine-in-10 (91%) Canadians believe their country needs to reduce its reliance on the U.S. as a trading partner in response to Trump’s tariffs.

Related: [Canadians feel need to reduce reliance on U.S. trade](#)

This appears to have led to a shift in priorities for Canadians when it comes to energy policy. More than two-in-five currently believe relying on domestic energy (46%) and creating economic growth (43%) should be the top priorities for the country’s policymakers. Investing in alternative sources (38%) is also high but falls behind. Further down the list are bringing down the price of gas (34%) and protecting the natural environment (31%).

The latter represents a steep decline from data taken in 2023. In August 2023, the environment was the top priority from Canadians when it came to setting energy policy. In the intervening time, the emphasis on creating economic growth has nearly doubled (23% to 43%).

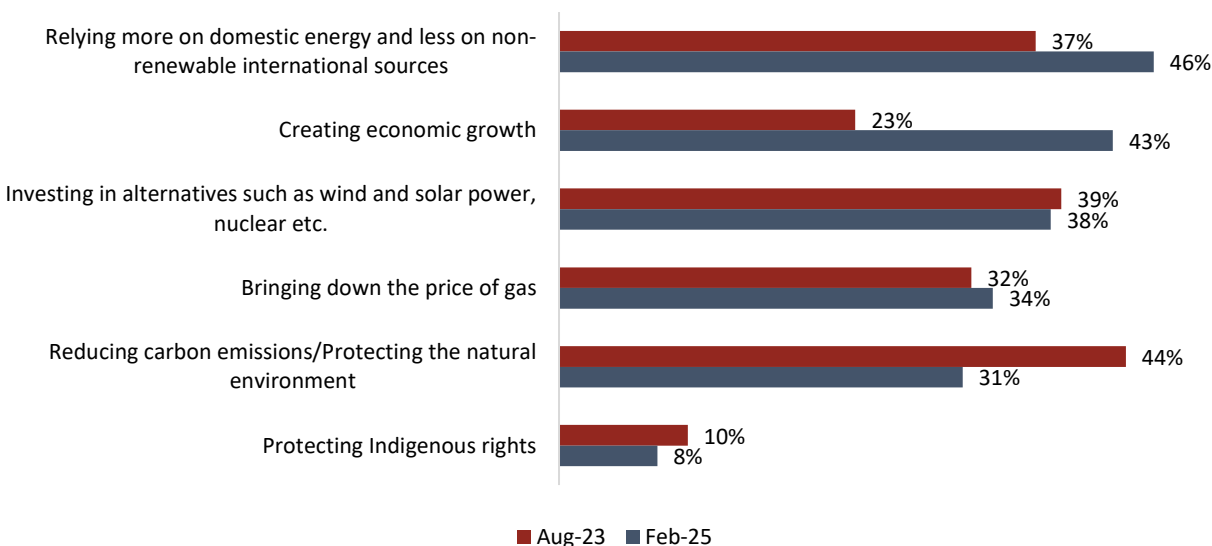
While Trump, and the threat he has posed to Canadian economic sovereignty in his second term, certainly factor into this switch, there has also been an overriding narrative from economists that Canada’s economic growth has stagnated in recent years. [In March 2024](#), Carolyn Rogers, the Bank of Canada’s senior deputy governor, described Canada’s flagging productivity as an emergency and that “it’s time to break the glass”.

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**When you think about energy policy in Canada, which of these is most important to you?
(Up to two chosen; all respondents, n=2,012)**



Priorities vary along the Energy Perspectives Index. The Reduce and Transition and Keep it in the Ground groups are much more likely to want energy policy to focus on alternative sources of energy and reducing carbon emissions. The price of gas is a bigger concern among the Carbon Keepers and Renewable Skeptics.

Notably, bolstering domestic energy production is a high priority across three groups of the spectrum, including those who lean towards preferring renewable energy sources:

When you think about energy policy in Canada, which of these is most important to you?					
	Total (n=2,012)	Energy Perspectives Index			
		Carbon Keepers	Renewable Skeptics	Reduce and Transition	Keep it in the Ground
Relying more on domestic energy and less on non-renewable international sources	46%	59%	52%	45%	26%
Creating economic growth	43%	67%	60%	29%	13%
Investing in alternatives such as wind and solar power, nuclear etc.	38%	9%	26%	48%	72%
Bringing down the price of gas	34%	60%	45%	24%	4%
Reducing carbon emissions/Protecting the natural environment	31%	3%	14%	44%	68%
Protecting Indigenous rights	8%	3%	4%	10%	16%

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Part Three: Energy expansion preferences

Canadians are most likely to support the expansion of hydro (88%), solar (77%) and wind (72%). Nuclear power (63%), natural gas (61%) and the expansion of crude oil (51%) are all supported by majorities of Canadians as well. Further fracking (34%) and coal (23%) projects are supported by one-third and one-quarter, respectively.

While renewables are popular among Canadians, there is a question of capacity. One analysis [in 2013](#) found that there was enough potential wind power in Canada, distributed in enough regions of the country, to replace current electricity usage, without accounting for potential storage. Meanwhile, [another study](#) found that just by installing solar panels on viable rooftops in Canada could generate a quarter of the country's electricity.

Solar capacity increased nearly 25,000 per cent between 2007 and 2022, while wind power increased more than 800 per cent [in the same period](#). However, in 2022, solar (1%) and wind (6%) accounted for just [a small percentage of Canada's electricity generation](#), far outstripped by hydro (62%), fossil fuels (17%) and nuclear (13%).

While hydroelectric dams are popular among Canadians, it has proven difficult to further expand Canada's capacity. In B.C., the [Site C dam](#) is nearing completion after discussion of potentially building the project dating back to the 1980s. The Gull Island hydroelectric project in Labrador has been discussed [since the 1970s](#), would be twice the size of Site C, and would also help supply future electricity needs in Quebec. However, it has been caught in disputes between Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador and the Innu Nation [over a historic deal signed between the provinces](#) to manage the revenues of the nearby Muskrat Falls plant. Some of those hurdles were cleared [in December](#) when Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador signed a deal which included an agreement on how to develop Gull Island.

Climate change, and [the potential drought it brings at high demand electricity periods](#), also threatens to wreak havoc on hydroelectric projects.

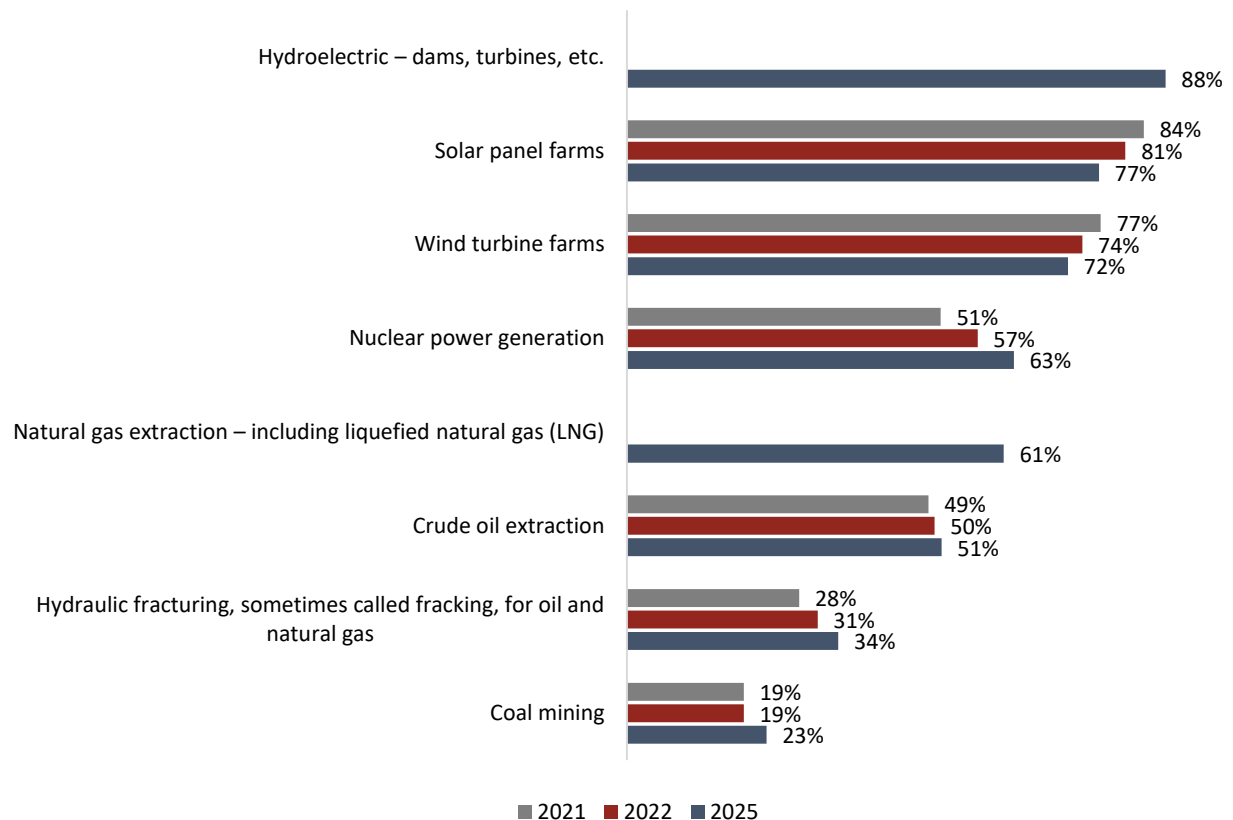
Since 2021, support for expanding solar developments has declined seven points, while support for wind turbine farms has declined five:

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Percentage of Canadians who support expanding efforts to draw energy from the following sources



A majority of supporters of the four main political parties in Canada support expanding the use of hydro and solar in Canada. Wind is more popular among Liberal, NDP and Bloc supporters, but support falls to half among those who would vote CPC if the election were today. Likely Bloc Québécois voters are the least supportive of the further expansion of nuclear power (27%).

Further development of crude oil (86%), natural gas (89%), and fracking (64%) is supported by a majority of CPC supporters. They are also more likely to support more coal mining, but not at a majority level (41%):

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Support for expanding each type of energy:					
	Total (n=2,012)	Federal vote intention			
		CPC	Liberal	NDP	BQ
Hydroelectric – dams, turbines, etc.	88%	89%	93%	88%	93%
Solar panel farms	77%	57%	93%	93%	88%
Wind turbine farms	72%	49%	92%	91%	81%
Nuclear power generation	63%	81%	64%	58%	27%
Natural gas extraction – including liquefied natural gas (LNG)	61%	89%	56%	33%	38%
Crude oil extraction	51%	86%	35%	20%	32%
Hydraulic fracturing, sometimes called fracking, for oil and natural gas	34%	64%	17%	11%	16%
Coal mining	23%	41%	8%	9%	7%

Hydro, nuclear popular across Energy Perspectives

Along the Energy Perspectives Index, the expansion of hydroelectric is one area of agreement. There is also majority support for nuclear power development across all four groups. Half of those who want to Reduce and Transition support LNG (48%), but otherwise, there is little support for oil, gas or coal among those who prefer Canada move towards developing greener sources of energy.

Support for expanding each type of energy:					
	Total (n=2,012)	Energy Perspectives Index			
		Carbon Keepers	Renewable Skeptics	Reduce and Transition	Keep it in the Ground
Hydroelectric – dams, turbines, etc.	88%	89%	82%	88%	94%
Solar panel farms	77%	38%	70%	93%	99%
Wind turbine farms	72%	32%	63%	88%	98%
Nuclear power generation	63%	87%	61%	55%	56%
Natural gas extraction – including liquefied natural gas (LNG)	61%	99%	79%	48%	15%
Crude oil extraction	51%	99%	77%	27%	0%
Hydraulic fracturing, sometimes called fracking, for oil and natural gas	34%	90%	47%	9%	0%
Coal mining	23%	80%	23%	2%	0%

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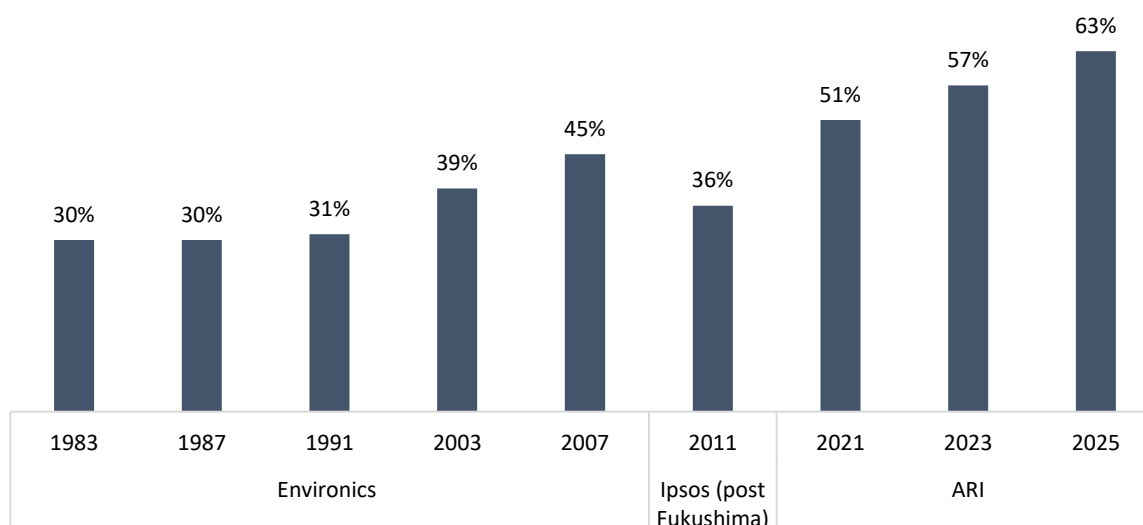
Nuclear support low in Quebec

Expanding use of renewables – hydro, solar and wind – have broad support across all regions. Majorities in all provinces except Quebec support the further development of nuclear power in the country. After the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan in 2011, Quebec [decommissioned its only nuclear power plant](#), Gentilly-2, located northeast of Montreal in Bécancour. Hydro-Québec, the government-run utility provider, had considered in 2023 reviving the plant, but was met with concerns from critics in the province after [“the collective choice to get out of nuclear power in Quebec”](#).

Support for expanding each type of energy:								
	Total (n=2,012)	Region						
		BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	ATL
Hydroelectric – dams, turbines, etc.	88%	91%	84%	86%	90%	88%	89%	84%
Solar panel farms	77%	79%	64%	61%	71%	77%	81%	83%
Wind turbine farms	72%	78%	65%	55%	68%	67%	78%	82%
Nuclear power generation	63%	62%	74%	79%	63%	76%	36%	63%
Natural gas extraction – including liquefied natural gas (LNG)	61%	68%	75%	76%	65%	63%	45%	62%
Crude oil extraction	51%	51%	66%	68%	61%	53%	36%	54%
Hydraulic fracturing, sometimes called fracking, for oil and natural gas	34%	32%	49%	51%	37%	35%	25%	33%
Coal mining	23%	23%	36%	48%	28%	22%	12%	26%

Meanwhile, support for nuclear power has been on a steady rise for the past 40 years – with a slight dip after the 2011 Fukushima disaster, [the last major nuclear disaster](#) the world has seen.

Support/Favourability for Nuclear Power:



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

For detailed results by Energy Perspectives Index, [click here](#).

For Energy Perspectives Index criteria, [click here](#).

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