

Wildfire fears burn hot, even as belief in human-caused climate change continues to decline

That said, three-quarters say climate change is contributing to worsening fires

July 20, 2026 – Smoke from hundreds of wildfires burning across northern Ontario has blanketed large parts of Canada and drifted deep into the United States this week, triggering air-quality warnings from the Midwest to the East Coast and threats of tariffs from the U.S. President, who argues Canada is not doing enough to control and prevent the fires.

Against this smoky backdrop, new data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute finds Canadians bracing for difficult fire seasons to become the norm. More than half (56%) say the number and impact of fires will worsen over the next 10 to 20 years, while 30 per cent say this type of challenging year is what can be expected. Just four per cent say there's hope for better going forward.

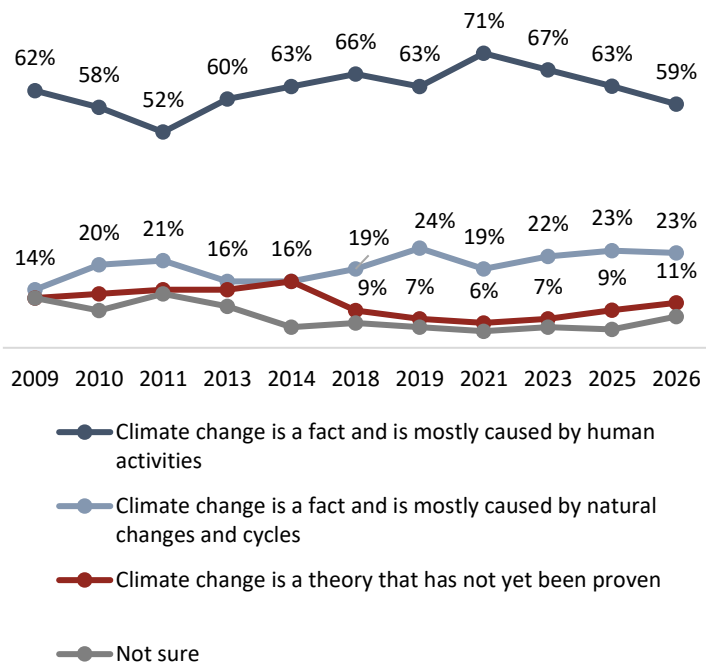
Most also connect the growing wildfire threat to climate change, even while the proportion of Canadians saying humans are causing it continues to drop.

Three-quarters say climate change is either a major (55%) or minor factor (20%) in making fires worse, despite the the number saying it is mostly caused by human activity dropping 12 points since 2021.

More Key Findings:

- A similar 12-point decrease is noted in the number of Canadians saying climate change poses a “very serious threat” to the planet (50% to 38%). Still, 68 per cent say the threat is serious or very serious overall

Which of the following statements comes closest to your view of climate change (or global warming)?



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from July 10-14, 2026, among a randomized sample of 2,649 Canadian adults. Respondents are drawn from the [Angus Reid Forum](#), a large-scale online panel developed to include Canadian residents in each of the 343 federal ridings in Canada and representative of the Canadian population by age, gender, family income, ethnic status and education. The sample was weighted to be representative of adults nationwide according to region, gender, age, household income, and education, based on the Canadian census. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2 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.

For more information on our polling methods, [click here](#).

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- B.C. residents are most likely to say they have made preparations in the case of a wildfire emergency this year. Three-in-10 say they have a “go bag” packed if they need to leave their home (29%) while 17 per cent say this nationally.
- Half (52%) of Canadians are confident in their local government’s ability to respond to wildfires. Quebec residents are most confident (66%) and Ontario residents least (42%).
- Half of those Canadians who say that climate change is a crisis and Canada needs to act quickly also say they support the recently announced Alberta to B.C. pipeline

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 One: Wildfires in Canada

Concern high for impacts of wildfires on nature, property, air quality

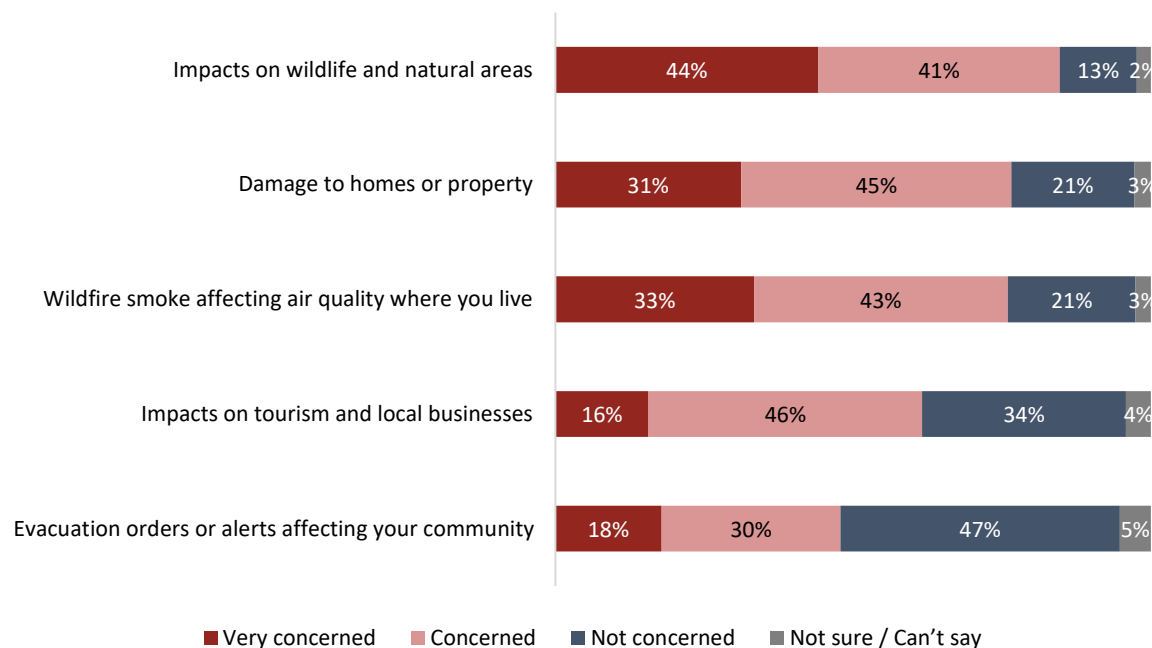
After three years of record-setting wildfires, the pace of burn this year has been slower according to satellite data collected by the CBC, but above the pre-2023 average. The effect has nevertheless been devastating for Canadian communities across the country with more than one thousand Canadians evacuated, a total of four deaths among firefighting crews, and thousands more affected by the smoke carried by winds across the country.

More than four-in-five (85%) say they are concerned (41%) or very concerned (44%) about the impact the fires are having on natural area, three-quarters (76%) worry over the potential damage to homes and property, and three-quarters (76%) are anxious over the deleterious effects of wildfire smoke on their local air quality.

Three-in-five (62%) worry about the potential impacts on businesses and tourism while half (48%) say they are concerned they personally might have to be evacuated in the event of a wildfire.

Note that this survey was fielded July 10-15, prior to a serious uptick in the intensity of the fires last week.

How concerned are you about each of the following wildfire-related issues? (All respondents, n=2,649)



Ontarians least confident in government response

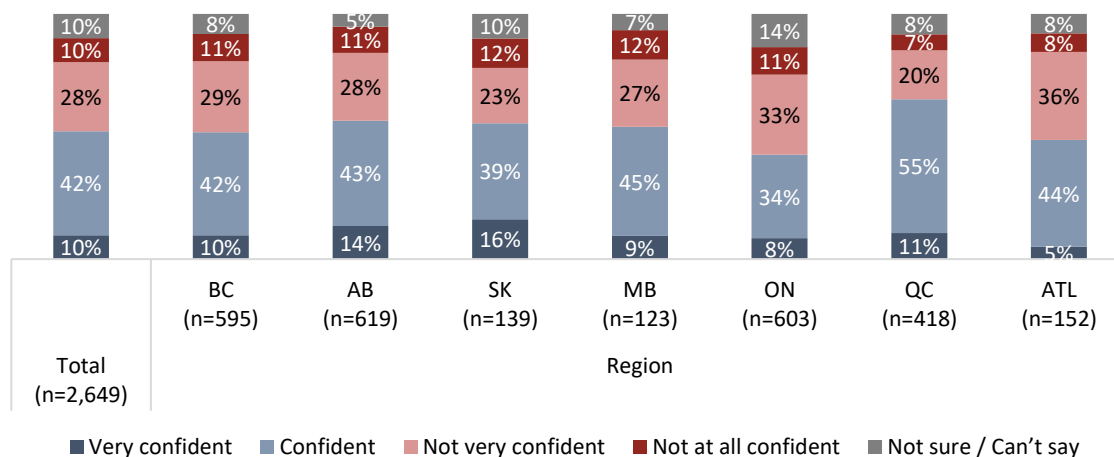
Half (52%) of Canadians say they are confident in their local government's ability to respond to wildfires as they emerge and at least half in every province in Ontario report faith in government response. In Canada's most populous province, as many say they are not confident (44%) as confident (42%).

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Ontario Premier Doug Ford defended his government's response to the wildfires after facing criticism from the chief of the Namaygoosisagagun First Nation who said she called for evacuation assistance which did not arrive before the community was overtaken by flames last week. The Canadian response to the wildfires has also been criticized by American politicians whose states have been covered by smoke.

How confident are you in your local government's ability to respond effectively to a wildfire emergency in your area?



British Columbians most likely to have prepared for a wildfire emergency

British Columbians are more likely than residents elsewhere in the country to have taken concrete steps to prepare for wildfire season. This likely reflects the province's long and severe experience with fire. Nearly three-in-10 say they have prepared an emergency kit or "go bag" (29%), cleared combustible material from around their home (28%) or reviewed their insurance coverage (27%), each approximately twice the national rate. For many, the threat is far from abstract: the devastating 2003 fire season included the Okanagan Mountain Park fire, which forced more than 33,000 people from their homes and destroyed or damaged nearly 240 residences. Two decades later, B.C.'s record-breaking 2023 season saw 2,293 wildfires burn approximately 2.84 million hectares, while tens of thousands were again ordered to evacuate as fires threatened communities around Kelowna and elsewhere.

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Which, if any, of the following has your household done to prepare for wildfire season?								
	Total (n=2,649)	Region						
		BC (n=595)	AB (n=619)	SK (n=139)	MB (n=123)	ON (n=603)	QC (n=418)	ATL (n=152)
Prepared an emergency kit or “go bag”	17%	29%	22%	10%	10%	13%	13%	28%
Purchased or replaced air filters or an air purifier	17%	23%	26%	20%	18%	16%	10%	16%
Cleared brush, leaves, or combustible material from around your home	16%	28%	17%	10%	16%	9%	14%	29%
Reviewed home or tenant insurance coverage	14%	27%	21%	14%	18%	11%	7%	25%
Purchased masks for smoke or poor air quality	11%	15%	14%	13%	10%	12%	6%	8%
Made an evacuation plan	10%	18%	13%	4%	6%	8%	9%	15%
Checked evacuation routes from your community	10%	18%	13%	2%	9%	9%	5%	15%

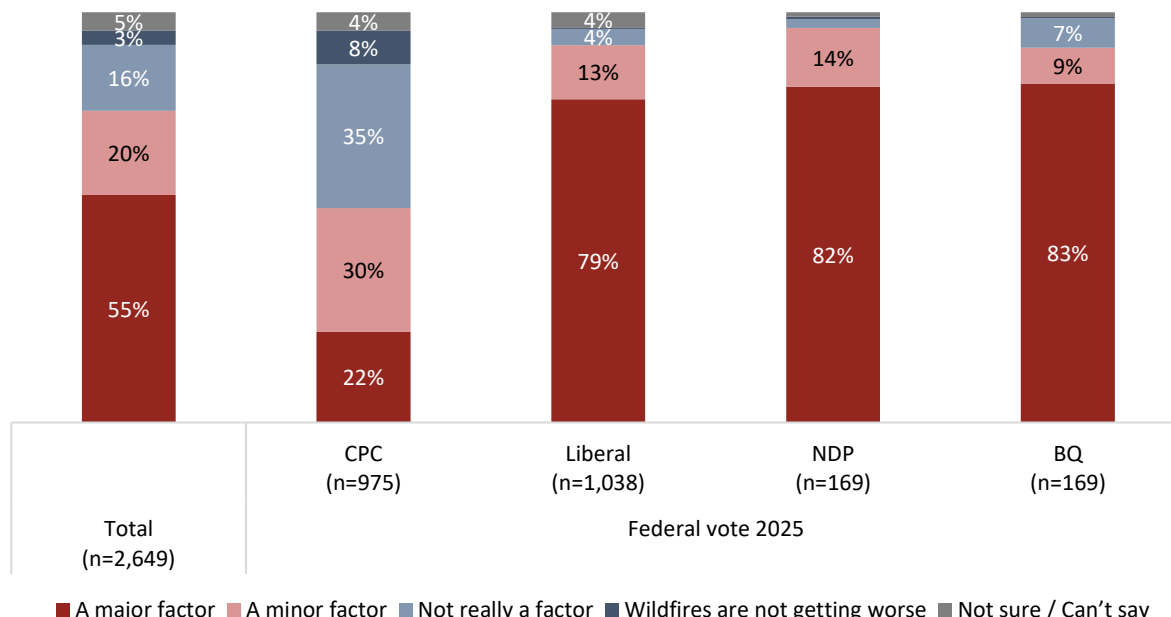
55% say climate change ‘major factor’ in worsening wildfires

A majority of Canadians link the worsening wildfire threat to climate change, though views are sharply divided along political lines. Overall, 55 per cent say climate change is a major factor and another 20 per cent call it a minor one. This rises to approximately four-in-five among past Liberal (79%), NDP (82%) and Bloc Québécois voters (83%), compared with 22 per cent among Conservatives.

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Do you believe climate change is a major factor, a minor factor, or not really a factor in making wildfires in Canada worse?



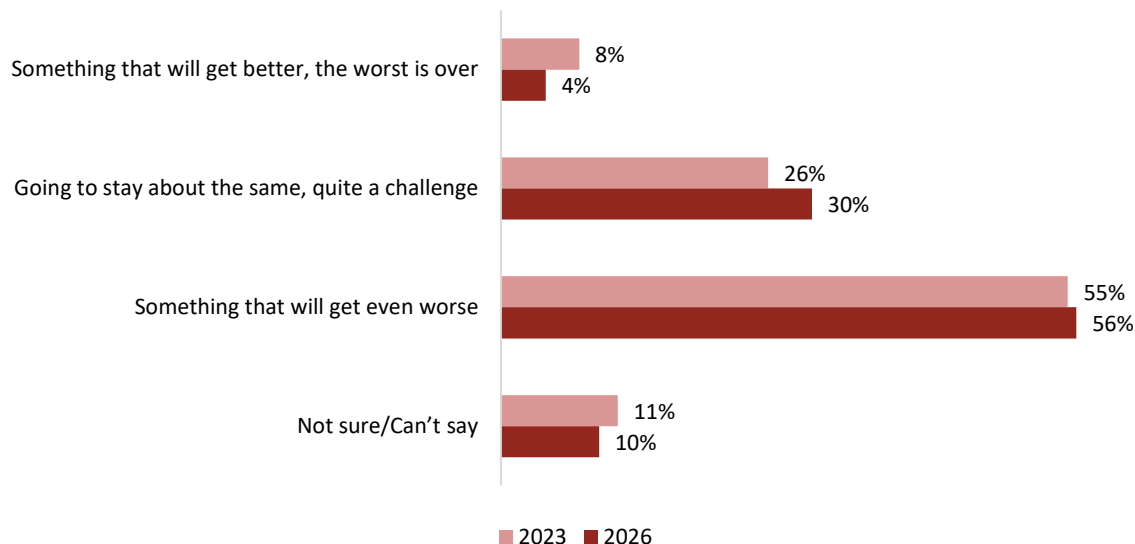
Majority expect wildfires to continue to get worse in the coming years

The broader trend supports the perception that the danger is growing. While the number of fires themselves may not be rising, Natural Resources Canada reports that warmer and drier conditions are lengthening Canada's fire season and allowing more intense fires to spread. Canadians are half as likely to say that this is something that will improve over the next 10 to 20 years as they were in 2023, while most say this is something that will get worse:

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Thinking again about the number of wildfires in Canada and their impact, over the next 10 to 20 years would you say this is:



Part Two: Climate change views

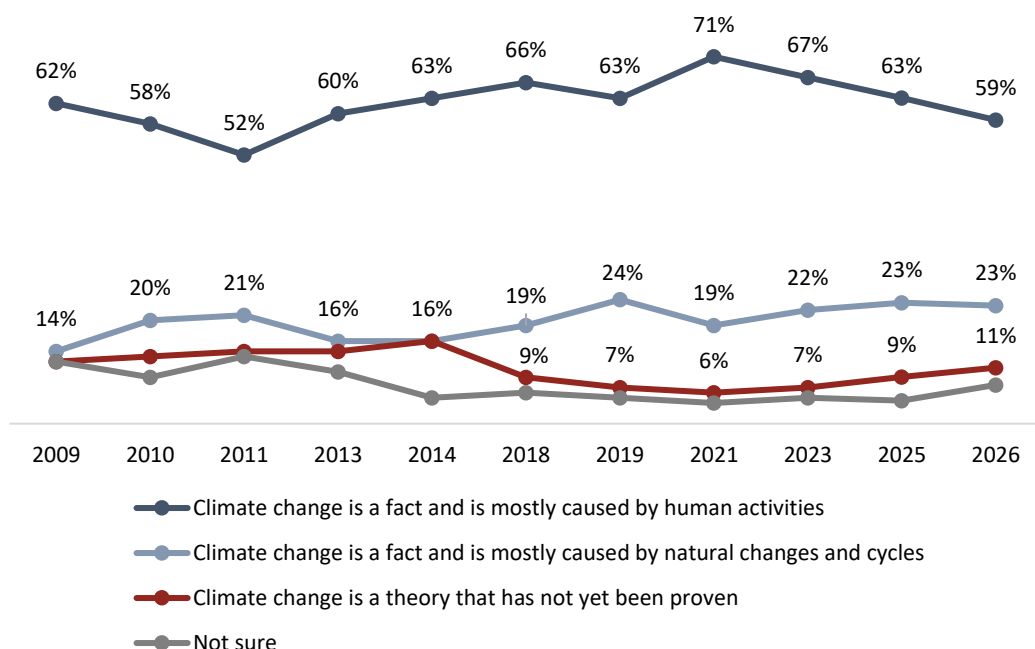
Declining number believe climate change 'mostly caused by human activities'

Despite a majority of Canadians saying that climate change is playing a major factor in the wildfire spread, the number of those who feel climate change is human caused has dropped over the past five years. A 12-point reduction in the number holding that view has been compensated for by a five-point jump in the number who say this is just an unproven theory and a four-point increase in the number who say it is caused by natural changes.

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Which of the following statements comes closest to your view of climate change (or global warming)?



Comparing current views to 2021

The reduction of belief in human-caused climate change is not unique to one group. Across all age and gender groups and political perspectives there has been movement away from this view. Conservatives and older Canadians have seen the largest shift, but young women too are much less likely to hold this view than they were in 2021.

Several factors may be contributing to this shift. Since 2021, climate change has had to compete with inflation, housing costs, health-care pressures and economic uncertainty for Canadians' attention. Recent polling finds the cost of living has consistently overshadowed climate change as a public priority. At the same time, the issue has become more politically entangled with carbon pricing, energy development and the perceived household cost of environmental policy. This may encourage some people to reassess not only proposed solutions, but the underlying cause of climate change itself.

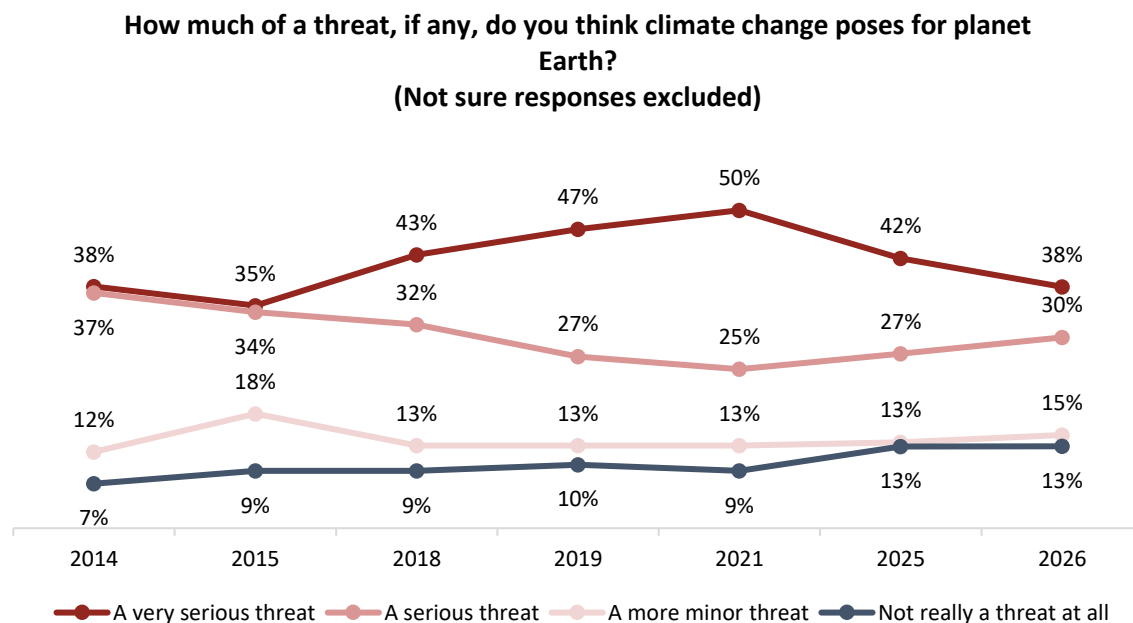
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Increase or decrease by percentage points in each view compared to 2021											
	Total	Federal vote				Male			Female		
		CPC	Lib	NDP	BQ	18-34	35-54	55+	18-34	35-54	55+
Climate change is a fact and is mostly caused by human activities	-12	-17	-7	-10	-13	-5	-10	-16	-14	-11	-15
Climate change is a fact and is mostly caused by natural changes and cycles	+4	+5	+2	+5	+2	0	+5	+7	+4	+2	+3
Climate change is a theory that has not yet been proven	+5	+8	+2	+3	+4	-1	+5	+6	+6	+7	+6
Not sure	+4	+4	+3	+1	+7	+6	+0	+3	+5	+2	+6

12-point drop from 2021 in number who view climate change as ‘very serious threat’

A similar drop is noted in the number of Canadians that view climate change as a “very serious” threat. In 2021, 50 per cent said this, compared to 38 per cent now. The total who see it as a serious or very serious threat remains at two-thirds, though down from 75 per cent at its peak:



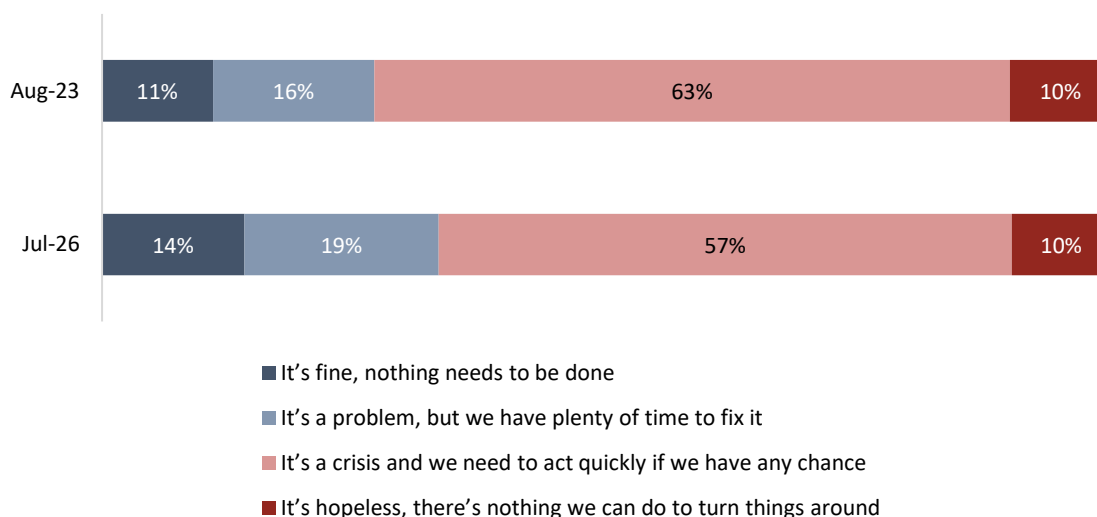
Majority believe climate change is ‘crisis’ that requires quick action

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What then, to do about it? While an evidently growing number of Canadians say that nothing needs to be done (either imminently or ever), the majority say it's a crisis and policies and actions should reflect that with expediency. For one-in-10, the view is that the crisis has already gone too far and cannot be stopped:

How do you feel about the current state of climate change and how society should respond: would you say:



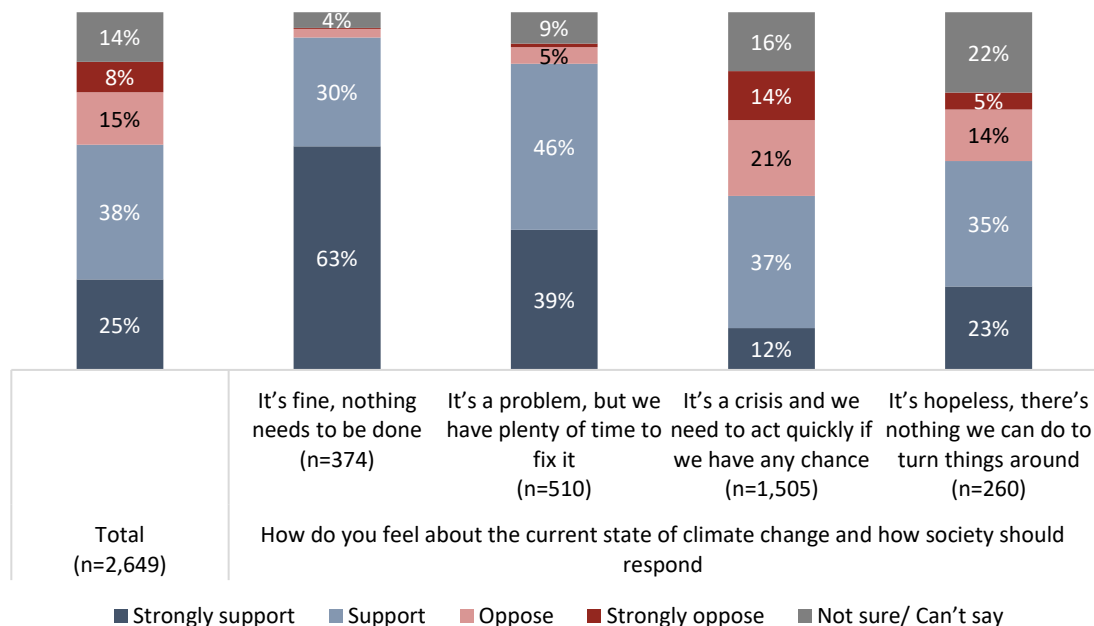
How climate change mindsets affect support of new pipeline

Some have [questioned Prime Minister Mark Carney](#) over his governments changing environmental policies and support of oil and gas expansion. Carney has stated that the investment brought in by oil and gas will help to expand renewable energy while making life affordable for Canadians. As to the expected pipeline to be built between Alberta and the B.C. coast in the coming years, half of those who say that climate change is a crisis and “we need to act quickly” say they support it:

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Support of new Alberta to B.C. pipeline by views on how society should respond to climate change



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

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