

Climate Change

Global warming or climate change is described by some as the greatest challenge ever faced by human civilization, but over the past year it has commanded strikingly little attention in the mainstream media and in policy/political debates in North America. The increasingly unpredictable and sometimes violent weather patterns experienced in many parts of the continent (which scientists predicted as an outcome of global warming) has not galvanized

an institutional response. It is as if the issue has become yesterday's news, and attention has shifted elsewhere.

Does this mean that Canadian citizens have lost interest or no longer take the issue of climate change as seriously as they did just a few short years ago? The survey included five questions on climate change that serve as key indicators of public opinion about the seriousness of climate change, sector responsibility for addressing the issue and carbon pricing.¹

Science on climate change

IS CLIMATE CHANGE HAPPENING? As has been the case since tracking began in 2007, a majority (57%) of Canadians believe that the scientific evidence about the existence of climate change is conclusive and that it is primarily caused by human activity. This proportion has increased marginally over the past 12 months and is now at its highest point since November 2009 (though still below the peak recorded in March 2007).

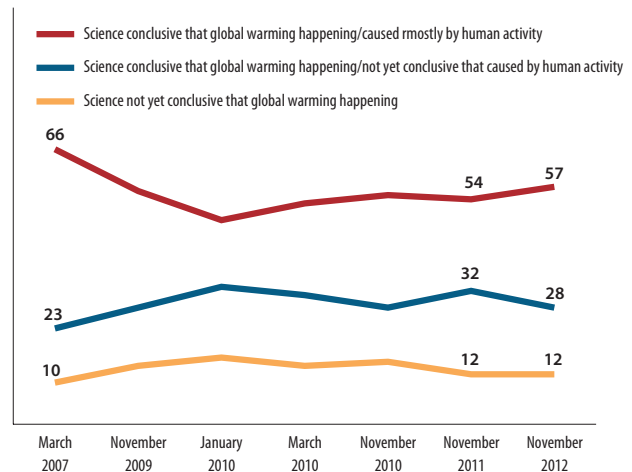
Less than three in ten (28%) now say climate change is real but do not feel the science proves humans are the main cause (down 4 points since 2011), while one in ten (12%) remain skeptical about the scientific evidence (unchanged since 2011, although down marginally from 2010 levels).

Opinions differ somewhat across the country in a predictable pattern. Belief in the science of climate change is most widespread in Quebec (70%), B.C. (61%) and Atlantic Canada (59%), lower in Ontario (51%) and Alberta (50%), and lowest in Saskatchewan (46%) and Manitoba (44%). Since 2011, these proportions have increased in Ontario and B.C., while declining in Quebec and Saskatchewan.

Belief in the science is also higher among younger, urban and educated Canadians, and those who affiliate with the

Science on climate change

March 2007 – November 2012



Q.43

Which one of the following best fits your own view about the latest scientific evidence about global warming...?

federal Green Party or Bloc Québécois, while lowest among those without a high school diploma, 60 years or older, and supporters of the federal Conservatives (23% of whom remain skeptical about the reality of climate change).

¹ These questions were drawn from an ongoing syndicated study (The Canadian Environmental Barometer) which has been conducted by the Environics Research Group since 2007.

DEALING WITH UNCERTAINTY. Canadians who are not convinced of the scientific reality of climate change remain divided on how best to deal with the uncertainty surrounding the issue. Just over half (52%) of this group say we should take strong actions now to reduce the chances of a worst case scenario, while 45 percent think it is best to hold off taking action until stronger evidence emerges of what may happen in the future.

A preference for acting now is more prevalent among Quebecers, women, younger Canadians and Green Party supporters, in comparison with residents in Saskatchewan and Alberta, Canadians without a high school diploma and Conservative Party supporters.

Sector most essential to progress on climate change

A growing majority of Canadians believe that the most essential progress on addressing climate change must come from government standards and regulations, rather than voluntary actions from industry or consumers.

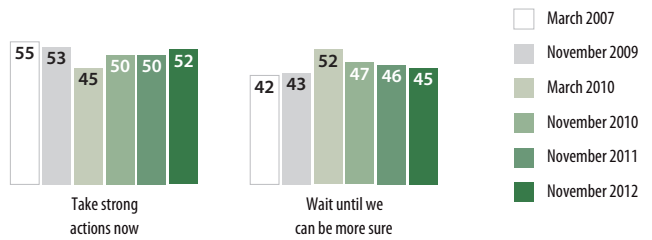
Who does the public look to for making serious progress on tackling climate change in Canada? Over the past five years, Canadians have looked first to government implementing, new standards and regulations (59%); this proportion has increased since 2011 and is now at the highest level yet recorded.

By comparison, the public is less apt to say the most essential actions must come from industry making new investments (17%) or consumers making lifestyle adjustments (10%). Close to one in ten (8%) continue to insist that all three sectors have an equally critical role to play in making progress on climate change in this country.

Government is the most widely looked-to sector across the country, but especially so in Quebec, among Canadians under 45, and supporters of the NDP, Green Party and Bloc Québécois. This also represents the plurality view among Conservative supporters (46%), who are more likely than others to look to either industry (22%) or consumers (18%) to take the lead role.

Best way to deal with uncertainty about global warming

March 2007 – November 2012



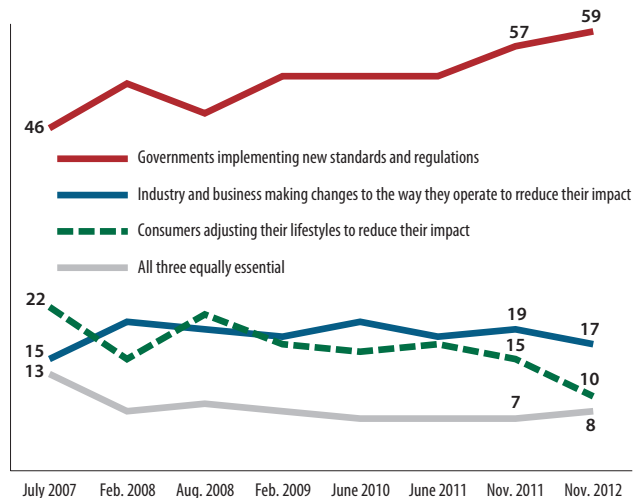
Q.44

Some people believe that the best way to deal with the uncertainty around global warming is to take strong actions now to reduce the chances of a worst case scenario. Other people believe the best way to deal with uncertainty is to hold off taking strong actions until we can be more sure about what might happen in the future. Which of these views is closer to your own?

Subsample: Those who believe that science is conclusive that global warming is happening, but not yet conclusive that it is caused by human activity or that the science is not yet conclusive that global warming is happening

Most essential to making serious progress on climate change

July 2007 – November 2012



Q.45

Which one of the following do you think is the most essential to making serious progress on the climate change problem in Canada over the next few years...?

Putting a price on carbon

SHOULD HOUSEHOLDS HELP PAY FOR CLIMATE CHANGE?

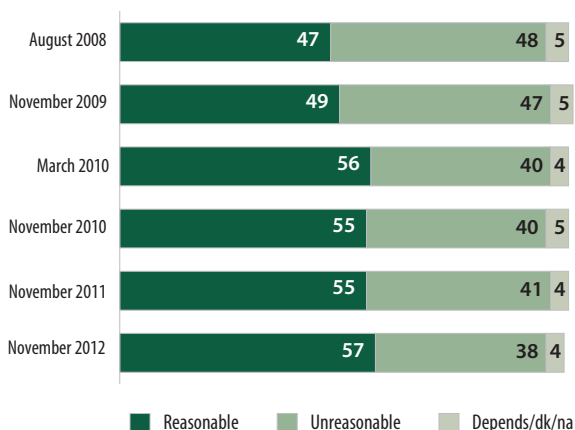
What is reasonable for households to pay for climate change actions? Substantive new strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in this country will cost significantly, and ultimately these costs will fall to consumers, whether through taxes or higher prices on products and services.

Are Canadians prepared to help pay for solutions to climate change? No public consensus exists, but a clear majority (57%) think it is reasonable for an average household to pay an additional \$100 per year in higher taxes and prices to help address this problem, up marginally from 2010 and 2011.

This is the majority view in all provinces, but highest in B.C. (60%) and Saskatchewan (60%), as well as among Canadians aged 18 to 29 (68%), and those who support the Liberal (66%), New Democratic (66%) and Green (65%) parties. Even among Conservative supporters, \$100 per year for climate change is considered reasonable by a 50-percent to 45-percent margin.

Is it reasonable for consumers to pay \$100 per year for climate change?

August 2008 – November 2012



Q.46

Some experts have said that consumers should be prepared to pay more to help do their part to address climate change in Canada, in the form of new government taxes and higher prices for certain kinds of products and services? Do you think an additional \$100 per year is a reasonable amount for an average household to pay or do you think this amount is unreasonable?

B.C. CARBON TAX. In 2008, British Columbia became the first (and to date the only) jurisdiction in North America to implement a true carbon tax aimed at reducing consumer use of greenhouse gas emitting fossil fuels. When introduced, this tax proved controversial, but over time it has gained public and political acceptance.

Today, close to two-thirds of British Columbians say they strongly (25%) or somewhat (39%) support this tax as a way to fight climate change, a noticeable increase over the past 12 months and now the highest level of support recorded since the carbon tax was first announced in February 2008. Since June 2011, the proportion strongly opposed to the provincial carbon tax has dropped almost in half (from 32% to 17%).

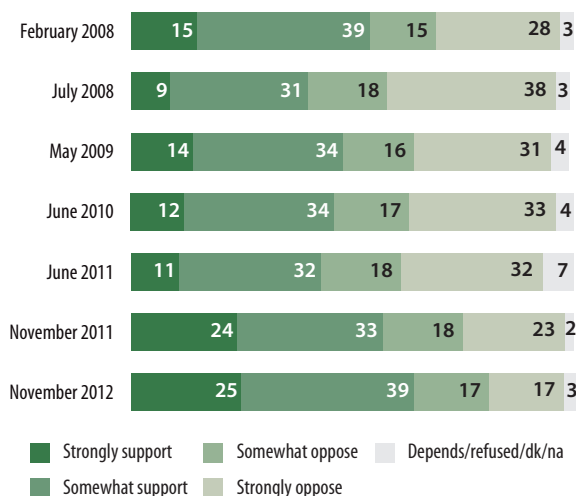
Elsewhere in Canada, politicians are quick to shut down any discussion about implementing such a carbon tax in their own jurisdiction and it is widely assumed that such a measure would be political suicide. Yet there is in fact considerable public support for just such a measure. Almost six in ten Canadians outside of B.C. say they would strongly (19%) or somewhat (40%) support a B.C.-style carbon tax in their own province, essentially unchanged from the viewpoint expressed one year ago.

The degree of support for a carbon tax varies noticeably across the country. Support is most widespread in Quebec (67%), followed by Manitoba (59%), Saskatchewan (58%), Ontario (58%) and Atlantic Canada (54%). In Alberta, only 43 percent voice support, compared with 53 percent who oppose such a tax.

Across the country, support is stronger among Canadians with higher levels of education, women, youth, and supporters of the NDP, Green Party and Bloc Québécois. Opposition is most evident among Canadians with the least education and Conservative Party supporters (by a 53-percent to 43-percent margin).

Support for carbon tax in B.C.

B.C. February 2008 – November 2012



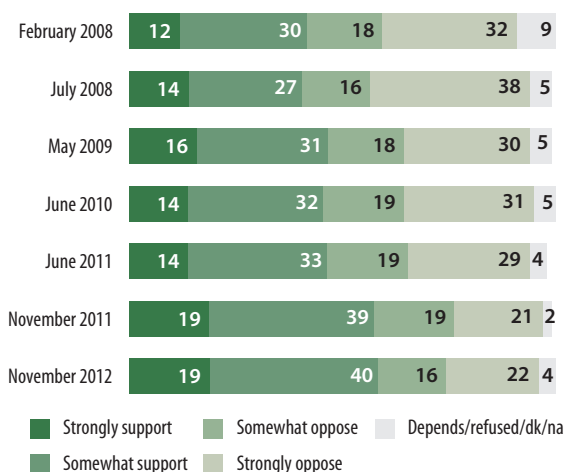
Q.47a

As you may know, British Columbia now has a tax on all carbon-based fuels used by consumers and businesses in the province, as a way to encourage reductions in greenhouse gas emissions generated in the province. This tax is now 7.2 cents per litre. This tax is "revenue neutral" which means the same amount raised through this tax each year is refunded – by law – to taxpayers in the form of lower personal income and corporate taxes. Do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose this carbon tax for B.C.?

Subsample: B.C. residents

Support for introducing B.C.-style carbon tax in own province

Rest of Canada February 2008 – November 2012



Q.47b

British Columbia now has a tax on all carbon-based fuels used by consumers and businesses in the province, as a way to encourage reductions in greenhouse gas emissions generated in the province. This tax is now 7.2 cents per litre. This tax is "revenue neutral" which means the same amount raised through this tax each year is refunded – by law – to taxpayers in the form of lower personal income and corporate taxes. Would you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose this type of carbon tax for your province?

Subsample: All except B.C. residents