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Canadians Agree We Need to Do More on Climate, But Divided on Whether Economy Should Suffer as a Result

Half (51%) insist we must balance economic considerations with environmental concerns as we move towards reducing global warming

Toronto, ON, August 25, 2021 — With 2021 seeing record-setting heat waves afflicting Canadians from coast to coast and one of the worst wildfire seasons in recent memory, Canadians indicate climate change is one of their [Top 5 issues](#) in the 44th Federal Election. While agreement is strong that *something* needs to be done about climate change (77% agree Canada needs to do more than it is, -1 pt from 2019), the question of *what should be done* remains unclear, especially since half (51% -5 pts from 2019) believe we need to balance economic considerations with environmental efforts.

The remaining half of Canadians are divided: 35% (+4 pts from 2019) believe we need to do everything we can to fight climate change immediately, even if the economy slows as a result, while 13% (+1 pt from 2019) feel there is no urgency to fight climate change if it comes at the expense of our economy.

While there is little variation by gender or generation, these attitudes largely map according to political parties supported: Conservative voters are significantly more likely than all other major party supporters to agree that there needs to be a balance between the economy and environment (67% vs 48% Lib, 42% NDP, 41% Bloc, 38% Green), or that there can be no urgency to fight climate change if it comes at the expense of the economy (19% vs. 13% Bloc, 7% NDP, 6% Lib, 3% Green). Conversely, Green party voters favour combating climate change even if the economy slows (60% vs. 51% NDP, 47% Lib, 47% Bloc, 14% Cons). However, even among the Greens, for whom climate action is a pillar, support is not unanimous: four in ten (38%) agree there needs to be a balance of economy and environment in fighting climate change.

Extreme weather making climate change clear for many

The recent extreme weather appears to be increasing concerns about climate change. More than eight in ten (84%) Canadians agree that extreme weather (like extended heat warnings, drought and wildfires) is more of a concern for them now than it was five years ago, perhaps a result of two thirds (66%) of Canadians saying they have been directly impacted by extreme weather. Canadians seem to be *more* concerned about climate change *because* of extreme weather (77%), while eight in ten (81%) feel that government should do more to support people impacted by extreme weather.

Given the record-breaking heat waves experienced this year on the West coast, residents of British Columbia are significantly more likely to agree with all the above statements, closely followed by residents of Quebec, who were battling a heat wave at the time they were surveyed. Respondents from these regions were more likely to agree that:

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- Extreme weather impacts (like extended heat warnings, drought and wildfires) are more of a concern for me now than they were five years ago (88% BC, 88% QC, 87% SK/MB, 85% ATL, 81% ON 76% AB)
- I am more concerned about climate change because of extreme weather (85% QC, 81% BC, 79% ATL, 78% SK/MB, 73% ON, 63% AB)
- Extreme weather has a direct impact on me (82% BC, 76% ATL, 70% SK/MB, 64% QC, 63% AB, 61% ON)
- Government should do more to support people impacted by extreme weather (86% BC, 84% ATL, 81% QC, 80% ON, 79% AB, 76% SK/MB).

We should do something to fight climate change, but what?

While the data show that extreme weather appears to have made climate change more personal for many, how to combat climate change remains unclear. Three quarters (74%, +1 pt since 2019) agree that Canada has an obligation to lead on climate change globally. A majority of voters for all political parties except the People's Party agree with this statement (92% BQ, 85% Lib, 83% NDP, 81% Green, 58% Cons, 15% PPC), indicating this will need to be a mandate for the next prime minister.

Statements that downplay the impact of climate change or Canada's ability to combat it see relatively low agreement, although there is some shifting since the last election:

- Only 27% agree that people who talk about climate change are overreacting (-5 pts from 2019)
- Only 34% agree that since Canada is a relatively small contributor to the world's pollution, there's not much we can do here to make a difference (+7 pts from 2019)

However, some pessimism is evident as half (49%, +8 pts from 2019) agree that no matter how hard we try, we won't be able to significantly reduce carbon emissions over the next decade and six in ten (58%, +4 pts from 2019) say that in order to combat climate change, the solutions will cause economic hardship in Canada.

That said, a majority (74%, -7 pts from 2019) of Canadians agree they would be more supportive of a carbon tax if they knew the money collected was going directly to initiatives to combat climate change, suggesting this may be an avenue of interest for whomever occupies the Prime Minister's Office after this election.

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About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between August 20 and 23, on behalf of Global News. A sample of $n = 1,500$ was interviewed online, via the Ipsos I-Say panel and non-panel sources, and respondents earn a nominal incentive for their participation. Quotas and weighting were employed to balance demographics to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. The precision of Ipsos polls which include non-probability sampling is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within ± 2.9 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Canadians been polled. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error. Ipsos abides by the disclosure standards established by the CRIC, found here:

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<https://ipsosintelligence.ca/canadiancontext/>

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