
PUBLIC SPLIT ON KYOTO ENVIRONMENTAL ACCORD

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-- Poll finds the most important environmental problem facing the world is air pollution, facing community water pollution --



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This Canada-wide poll was conducted by telephone between January 26th and February 2nd, 1998 among a representative cross-section of 1,510 adult Canadians.

The data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to the 1996 Census data.

With a national sample of 1,510, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the results are within ± 2.5 percentage points of what they would have been had the entire adult Canadian population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within the various sub-groupings of the survey population.

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In December, over 150 countries – including Canada – met in Kyoto, Japan to negotiate an agreement to reduce fossil fuel emissions which have been linked to the heating up of the planet’s climate, known as “global warming” or the “Greenhouse Effect”. The compromise reached at the meeting requires Canada to cut fossil fuel emissions by 6 percent to below 1990 levels; this target must be reached between the years 2008 and 2012.

The latest National Angus Reid Poll, conducted between January 26th and February 2nd, 1998 among a representative cross-section of 1,510 adult Canadians, indicates that the public is split over whether the Kyoto Environmental Accord goes far enough.

A slim plurality 46% believe that the Accord’s required reduction is “just about right” however, almost as many believe the Accord “does not go far enough” toward protecting the environment (42%). Only 6% indicate that the Accord goes too far and will harm industries and jobs in Canada. Examining the two extremes of this debate, it is interesting that those who believe the Accord “does not go far enough” outrank those who believe it “goes too far” by a 7:1 margin.

These results are quite consistent across the country and within socio-demographic groupings. The only difference appears to be in Alberta where the results were much narrower. In Alberta, a full 19% believe that the Accord “goes too far” and will harm industries and jobs in Canada (compared with the national average of 6%) versus 29% who indicate that the Accord “does not go far enough” toward protecting the environment (compared to 42% nationally). Even so, consistent with the rest of the country, 47% of Albertans indicate that the Accord is “just about right”.

GLOBAL AND LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PRIORITIES

-- Canadians regard global warming as a much more important issue than they did in the past --

Canadians were also asked to name the two most serious environment issues they think face the world today (since respondents were allowed to name more than one problem, on an open ended basis, totals exceed 100%).

The Angus Reid Group's tracking of the most important environmental issues facing the world, indicates that global warming has gained much more prominence over the last few years. Today, 22% of Canadians indicate that global warming is among the two most important environmental issues facing the world. Its score has tripled since 1996 when it was named by 7% of Canadians.

The top world environmental problem as mentioned by Canadians were air pollution (24%), global warming (22%), water pollution (22%), ozone depletion (20%), pollution (general) (15%) and forestry/deforestation (14%).

From a regional perspective, there were some differences; Albertans rank ozone depletion (25%) higher than any other region and the issue of air pollution (15%) lower than any other region. In BC, forestry/deforestation (22%) is eight percentage points higher than the national average.

From a gender perspective, there is little statistical difference – however, top of mind, 27% of men versus 17% of women mention global warming; alternately, 16% of women versus 11% of men name forestry/deforestation among their top two environmental concerns.

At the local level, respondents were then asked to identify the two most serious environmental problems facing their community today (again, on an open ended basis as in the question above). The most often mentioned issued facing their communities was water pollution (24%) followed by air pollution (21%), garbage/landfill waste (15%), forestry/deforestation (10%) and auto exhaust (7%).

On a regional basis there are some differences;

- In BC, the top issues are water pollution (36%) 12 points higher than the national average, air pollution (35%), 14 points higher than the national average, and forestry/deforestation (23%), 13 points higher than the national average.

- In Alberta, the foremost issues are water pollution (18%), garbage/landfill (17%) and air pollution at 16%.
- In Saskatchewan/Manitoba respondents are least likely to name two serious environmental problems – with 22% indicating “don’t know”.
- In Ontario, the primary issues are air pollution (22%), water pollution (20%) and garbage/landfill (18%).
- In the province of Quebec, 30% indicate that water pollution is the most serious community environmental problem (Quebecers are twice as likely to name water pollution over all other concerns).
- In Atlantic Canada, the number one issue is garbage/landfill waste (24% -- which is nine points higher than the national average) followed by water pollution (17%) and forestry/deforestation at 15%.

There is no apparent significant demographic difference in the overall ranking of the issues.

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Full survey details are available at the Angus Reid Group website at: www.angusreid.com