

Should carbon be priced?

Should public opinion decide pipelines?

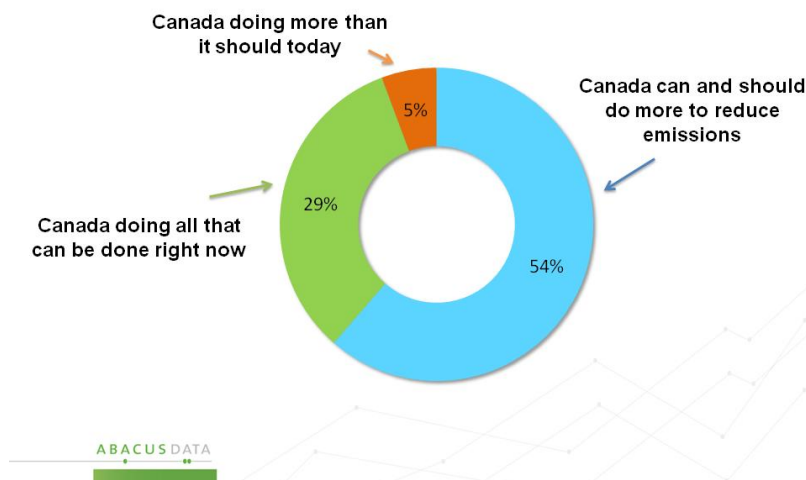
By Bruce Anderson & David Coletto

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In our year-end public opinion poll, we asked people a handful of questions related to climate change, pricing carbon emissions, and how “social license” for new projects like pipelines should be considered. Here’s what we found.

- When it comes to Canada’s “record on the issue of climate change” 54% of those surveyed believe “Canada can and should do more”, while 29% believe “Canada is doing as much as can be done right now” and 5% say the country is doing “more to reduce emissions than it should”. Another 12% are unsure.

How is Canada doing at reducing emissions?



- In as much as carbon pricing is a concept that is often seen as affecting Alberta more than other provinces, it is worth noting that in Alberta, 48% say Canada can and should do

more. Also, among those who voted Conservative in 2011, 40% say more should be done. 58% of Liberal Party voters, and 70% of NDP voters holds view feel that way.

- Respondents were presented with two perspectives about attaching a price to carbon: "Some say Canada should introduce a policy that provides a financial incentive to reduce carbon emissions over time" or "Others oppose this idea because they feel it would be harmful to the economy and consumers' standard of living".

Asked which was closer to their personal view, 69% favoured a carbon reduction incentive compared to 31% who opposed the idea. Support for the idea was 64% in Alberta and 56% among those who voted Conservative in 2011.

Which view comes closest to your view?

Canada should introduce a policy that provides a financial incentive to reduce carbon emissions over time.

69%

Canada should not introduce a policy that provides a financial incentive to reduce carbon emissions because it would be harmful to the economy and consumers' standard of living.

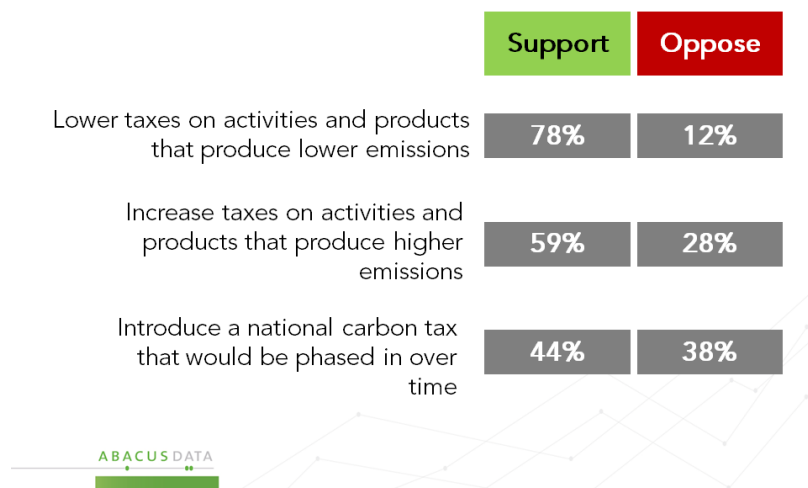
31%

We went on to explore how people would react to three different ways of imagining a carbon-pricing regime. These questions reveal how the form of such a policy and the manner in which it is communicated can affect the way voters react.

- Asked if they would support or oppose **"increasing taxes on those activities and products that generate more emissions"**. 59% support and 28% oppose. The split was 59%-28% in Alberta and 56%-36% among those who voted Conservative in 2011.
- However when asked about **"lowering taxes on those activities and products that produce lower emissions"** support jumps to 78%, including 82% among Conservatives and 70% in Alberta.

- Finally, “introducing a national carbon tax that would be phased in over time” finds that support drops to 44% and opposition rises to 38%. Opposition outnumbers support in BC, and there is an equal split in Ontario. Among Conservative voters, only 33% support this notion, and 54% oppose it.

Pricing Emissions



Finally, we wanted to touch on the question of “social license” for major projects such as pipelines. We offered two perspectives and asked people which was closer to their view.

“How Canada decides about infrastructure like pipelines should involve public inquiries and comment but should ultimately be made based on a calculation of economic and energy needs together with rigorous safety studies” or “If most citizens are uncomfortable with a new pipeline project then it should not be built”.

Social License – How to Decide?

How Canada decides about infrastructure like pipelines should involve public enquiries and comment but should ultimately be made based on a calculation of economic and energy needs together with rigorous safety studies.

65%

If most citizens are uncomfortable with a new pipeline project then it should not be built.

35%



Two out of three (65%) say the decisions should rest on economic and scientific evaluation, rather than public opinion. The breakdowns of responses show some cleavages of opinion. Majorities of CPC (81%), LPC (68%) and NDP (56%) reject the idea of a public opinion veto, while majorities of those who support the Green Party (62%) and the BQ (62%) feel that public opinion should prevail. In Quebec, opinion is evenly split (51%-49%).

The Upshot

The results of these questions provide a good snapshot of the backdrop for some of the issues that will be topical in the coming election. Three themes emerge.

First, a significant number of people would prefer to see Canada do more to combat climate change. Far fewer are satisfied the country is doing as much as it should.

Second, if pricing carbon is to be part of a path forward, how the policy is designed and described will have a lot to do with the public reaction it will engender. The term "carbon tax" is clearly the least palatable moniker for a policy that puts a value on emissions. At the same time, describing the objective, "a financial incentive to reduce emissions" triggers 69% support. This 25-point gap shows just how much the "bumper sticker" matters, and reflects public instincts to avoid measures that sound painful in favour of those that sound more gentle.

Finally, most people reject the notion that public opinion should hold an effective veto over potentially important infrastructure projects such as pipelines. On balance most people believe that the public should be heard, and attentively so, but that public input should only be one consideration among others.

Methodology

Our survey was conducted online with 1,438 Canadians aged 18 and over from December 18 to 20, 2014. A random sample of panelists was invited to complete the survey from a large representative panel of Canadians, recruited and managed by Research Now, one of the world's leading provider of online research samples.

The Marketing Research and Intelligence Association policy limits statements about margins of sampling error for most online surveys. The margin of error for a comparable probability-based random sample of the same size is +/- 2.6%, 19 times out of 20. The data were weighted according to census data to ensure that the sample matched Canada's population according to age, gender, educational attainment, and region. Totals may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

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When you think about Canada's record on the issue of climate change which is closer to your point of view?

Sample size: 1,483

Comparable MoE: $\pm 2.6\%$, 19 times out of 20

Fields dates: December 18 to 20, 2014

		Canada can and should do more	Canada is doing as much as can be done right now	Canada is doing more to reduce emissions that it should	Unsure	Raw	Weighted
Region	All Respondents	54%	29%	5%	12%	1483	1468
	BC	49%	30%	5%	17%	243	195
	AB	48%	34%	6%	12%	200	156
	SK/MB	55%	30%	6%	9%	137	103
	ON	52%	31%	6%	11%	396	572
	QC	62%	23%	4%	12%	393	341
	Atlantic	59%	28%	1%	13%	114	101
Gender	Male	51%	34%	6%	9%	733	699
	Female	57%	25%	4%	15%	750	769
Age	18 - 29	60%	26%	3%	10%	273	298
	30 - 44	49%	27%	7%	16%	432	409
	45 - 59	56%	27%	5%	12%	490	423
	60 and over	52%	36%	4%	8%	288	339
	Conservative Party	40%	45%	7%	8%	454	459
2011 vote	Liberal Party	58%	28%	5%	9%	298	289
	NDP	70%	20%	2%	7%	305	281
	Green Party	66%	21%	3%	9%	64	63
	Bloc Quebecois	72%	14%	5%	9%	80	70
	Did not vote	51%	19%	5%	25%	261	284

Some people believe that Canada should introduce a policy that provides a financial incentive to reduce carbon emissions over time. Others oppose this idea because they feel it would be harmful to the economy and consumers' standard of living.

Which view comes closest to your own?

Sample size: 1,483

Comparable MoE: $\pm 2.6\%$, 19 times out of 20

Fields dates: December 18 to 20, 2014

		Canada should introduce a policy that provides a financial incentive to reduce carbon emissions over time.	Canada should NOT introduce a policy that provides a financial incentive to reduce carbon emissions because it would be harmful to the economy and consumers' standard of living.	Raw	Weighted
Region	All Respondents	69%	31%	1483	1468
	BC	72%	28%	243	195
	AB	64%	36%	200	156
	SK/MB	69%	31%	137	103
	ON	67%	33%	396	572
	QC	73%	27%	393	341
Gender	Atlantic	68%	32%	114	101
	Male	66%	34%	733	699
	Female	71%	29%	750	769
Age	18 - 29	69%	31%	273	298
	30 - 44	74%	26%	432	409
	45 - 59	69%	31%	490	423
	60 and over	62%	38%	288	339
2011 vote	Conservative Party	56%	44%	454	459
	Liberal Party	73%	27%	298	289
	NDP	77%	23%	305	281
	Green Party	69%	31%	64	63
	Bloc Quebecois	77%	23%	80	70
	Did not vote	74%	26%	261	284

Please indicate if you would strongly support, support, oppose or strongly oppose each of the following ideas.

Increasing taxes on those activities and products that generate more emissions

Sample size: 1,483

Comparable MoE: $\pm 2.6\%$, 19 times out of 20

Fields dates: December 18 to 20, 2014

		Strongly support	Support	Oppose	Strongly oppose	Unsure	Raw	Weighted
Region	All Respondents	18%	41%	17%	11%	13%	1483	1468
	BC	20%	41%	11%	13%	15%	243	195
	AB	16%	43%	17%	7%	16%	200	156
	SK/MB	16%	46%	15%	9%	12%	137	103
	ON	15%	43%	18%	12%	12%	396	572
	QC	22%	38%	16%	10%	14%	393	341
Gender	Atlantic	24%	34%	21%	9%	12%	114	101
	Male	19%	42%	16%	13%	9%	733	699
	Female	17%	41%	17%	9%	17%	750	769
Age	18 - 29	18%	39%	14%	13%	16%	273	298
	30 - 44	18%	41%	17%	10%	14%	432	409
	45 - 59	17%	41%	18%	12%	13%	490	423
	60 and over	20%	44%	16%	9%	11%	288	339
	Conservative Party	13%	43%	21%	15%	9%	454	459
2011 vote	Liberal Party	18%	45%	19%	6%	13%	298	289
	NDP	22%	48%	11%	8%	10%	305	281
	Green Party	34%	32%	17%	9%	8%	64	63
	Bloc Quebecois	30%	40%	9%	9%	12%	80	70
	Did not vote	17%	32%	15%	12%	24%	261	284

Please indicate if you would strongly support, support, oppose or strongly oppose each of the following ideas.

Lowering taxes on those activities and products that produce lower emissions

Sample size: 1,483

Comparable MoE: $\pm 2.6\%$, 19 times out of 20

Fields dates: December 18 to 20, 2014

	Row %	Strongly support	Support	Oppose	Strongly oppose	Unsure	Raw	Weighted
Region	All Respondents	25%	53%	9%	3%	10%	1483	1468
	BC	28%	52%	6%	5%	9%	243	195
	AB	15%	55%	11%	4%	15%	200	156
	SK/MB	22%	59%	3%	4%	12%	137	103
	ON	26%	54%	10%	3%	8%	396	572
	QC	26%	48%	10%	4%	12%	393	341
Gender	Atlantic	27%	50%	10%	1%	12%	114	101
	Male	24%	53%	9%	5%	9%	733	699
	Female	25%	53%	9%	2%	11%	750	769
Age	18 - 29	30%	45%	11%	4%	10%	273	298
	30 - 44	24%	51%	9%	3%	13%	432	409
	45 - 59	24%	55%	8%	3%	9%	490	423
	60 and over	22%	58%	8%	4%	9%	288	339
2011 vote	Conservative Party	24%	58%	9%	4%	6%	454	459
	Liberal Party	21%	56%	10%	2%	11%	298	289
	NDP	28%	54%	8%	2%	8%	305	281
	Green Party	37%	42%	8%	6%	7%	64	63
	Bloc Quebecois	29%	43%	12%	7%	9%	80	70
	Did not vote	25%	46%	9%	2%	18%	261	284

Please indicate if you would strongly support, support, oppose or strongly oppose each of the following ideas.

Introducing a national carbon tax that would be phased in over time

Sample size: 1,483

Comparable MoE: $\pm 2.6\%$, 19 times out of 20

Fields dates: December 18 to 20, 2014

		Strongly support	Support	Oppose	Strongly oppose	Unsure	Raw	Weighted
Region	All Respondents	11%	33%	21%	17%	19%	1483	1468
	BC	9%	29%	20%	19%	22%	243	195
	AB	7%	40%	19%	17%	18%	200	156
	SK/MB	13%	40%	10%	22%	15%	137	103
	ON	8%	33%	25%	16%	18%	396	572
	QC	17%	30%	21%	14%	18%	393	341
Gender	Atlantic	11%	36%	16%	15%	23%	114	101
	Male	11%	35%	19%	20%	15%	733	699
	Female	10%	31%	23%	13%	22%	750	769
Age	18 - 29	14%	34%	21%	14%	18%	273	298
	30 - 44	10%	33%	22%	14%	20%	432	409
	45 - 59	9%	35%	19%	19%	19%	490	423
	60 and over	11%	30%	23%	19%	18%	288	339
2011 vote	Conservative Party	6%	27%	27%	27%	13%	454	459
	Liberal Party	12%	42%	20%	9%	17%	298	289
	NDP	12%	42%	17%	11%	17%	305	281
	Green Party	27%	34%	15%	9%	16%	64	63
	Bloc Quebecois	24%	27%	24%	9%	17%	80	70
	Did not vote	9%	27%	18%	15%	31%	261	284

Which of the following is closer to your point of view?

Sample size: 1,483

Comparable MoE: $\pm 2.6\%$, 19 times out of 20

Fields dates: December 18 to 20, 2014

		How Canada decides about infrastructure like pipelines should involve public enquiries and comment but should ultimately be made based on a calculation of economic and energy needs together with rigorous safety studies.	If most citizens are uncomfortable with a new pipeline project then it should not be built.	Raw	Weighted
Region	All Respondents	65%	35%	1483	1468
	BC	61%	39%	243	195
	AB	81%	19%	200	156
	SK/MB	70%	30%	137	103
	ON	70%	30%	396	572
	QC	51%	49%	393	341
	Atlantic	66%	34%	114	101
Gender	Male	69%	31%	733	699
	Female	62%	38%	750	769
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2011 vote	Conservative Party	81%	19%	454	459
	Liberal Party	68%	32%	298	289
	NDP	56%	44%	305	281
	Green Party	38%	62%	64	63
	Bloc Quebecois	38%	62%	80	70
	Did not vote	59%	41%	261	284