



# Climate Policy in the Federation

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2025 SERIES

# Environics Institute

For Survey Research

The Environics Institute for Survey Research was established by Michael Adams in 2006 with a mandate to conduct in-depth public opinion and social research on the issues shaping Canada's future. It is through such research that Canadians can better understand themselves and their changing society.

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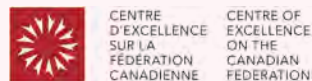


The Confederation of Tomorrow surveys give voice to Canadians about the major issues shaping the future of the federation and their political communities. They are conducted annually by an association of the country's leading public policy and socio-economic research organizations.

The 2025 study consists of a survey of 5,391 adults, conducted between May 1 and June 16, 2025 (92% of the responses were collected between May 6 and May 29); 90% of the responses were collected online. The remaining responses were collected by telephone (both landline and cell phone) from respondents living in the North or on First Nations reserves, or from francophone respondents in New Brunswick.

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# Summary

In Canada today, there is little debate that climate change is happening due to rising levels of carbon emissions in the atmosphere; that this presents a serious threat to society requiring collective action; and that this will require a significant reduction in fossil fuel emissions as the main contributor to global warming. The reality of a changing climate is being pressed upon Canadians in the form of unprecedented experiences with heat waves, forest fire devastation and destructive storms. Public opinion surveys show that most Canadians believe that climate change is a serious problem and want to see their governments take action.

But what actions? As a country with an economy heavily reliant on resource development, especially fossil fuel extraction, climate policy has been an ongoing source of political tension. The Trudeau-led Liberal government elected a decade ago promised to make climate policy one of its signature achievements. It introduced a national carbon tax and rebate program to cover provinces and territories that did not have their own comparable policy in place. While this policy was designed to be revenue neutral (i.e., rebates that reimbursed consumers for the taxes paid on purchased fuels), it was actively opposed by several provinces and the federal Conservative Party as an unacceptable government “tax grab” that punished Canadians already burdened with a rising cost of living. With a federal election looming, Mark Carney’s first decision as Prime Minister was to cancel the federal carbon pricing policy, with a promise to replace it with something more politically acceptable.



## Environmental versus economic priorities

The latest Confederation of Tomorrow research, conducted in May-June 2025, reveals that public concerns about climate change notwithstanding, Canadians are placing increasing priority on economic security over the importance of reducing carbon emissions. This change is especially evident in British Columbia – and, as a result, the gaps in opinions between B.C. residents and their neighbours in Alberta are narrowing.

As a matter of principal, Canadians are evenly divided when asked to choose between protecting the environment and protecting jobs. This split reflects the general pattern recorded on previous surveys – but, since 2023, the proportion favouring environmental protection remains lower than in previous years. Opinions across the country show a predictable pattern in which job protection attracts stronger support in the fossil fuel-producing Prairie provinces, but this gap with other regions has narrowed over the past year as the priority on environmental protection has strengthened in both Saskatchewan and Alberta, while weakening in B.C. (where this view has been declining steadily since 2022).

*Public concerns about climate change notwithstanding, Canadians are placing increasing priority on economic security over the importance of reducing carbon emissions.*

On a more day-to-day level, public attention continues to be focused on current economic issues. When asked to name the country's most important problem, most name the rising cost of living, affordable housing, inflation or the current trade dispute with the USA. By comparison, very few identify climate change or the environment as Canada's main challenge, with this proportion now at the lowest yet recorded by the Confederation of Tomorrow research.

## Timetable for phasing out fossil fuels

How quickly do Canadians believe the country should be phasing out its reliance on fossil fuels in order to stave off the effects of climate change? Of the three options presented, a plurality continues to favour the middle option, which entails a gradual phase-out of fossil fuels to minimize job losses in affected industries. But support for this option has declined over the past year and is now at its lowest level since 2020. An increasing minority of Canadians now favours a slower timetable for fossil fuel reductions that prioritizes protecting jobs in the fossil fuel industry, while half as many now choose the “as quickly as possible” phase-out option that might put people out of work. This latest trend toward favouring a slower timetable for carbon emission reduction is evident across most parts of the country, but most noticeably in B.C., Manitoba and Atlantic Canada.

## Priorities in addressing climate change

The current public perspective on balancing climate and economic priorities is further reflected in how Canadians now view 10 broad policy strategies presented in the research. As in 2021, the public is most likely to assign a high priority to strategies aimed at ensuring economic stability in all regions, keeping taxes low and ensuring businesses stay competitive with the USA.

But, over this period, Canadians are giving increasing importance to some strategies directed at economic development and jobs (e.g., keeping taxes low, minimizing government interference in the free market) and less priority on reducing carbon emission (e.g., meeting targets agreed to in international agreements). This trend is evident in most parts of the country, but is most pronounced in B.C. and the Atlantic provinces, narrowing the gap between their views and those held in the Prairie provinces.

## Trust in governments on addressing climate change

As in past years, the federal government continues to be the more trusted level of government to address climate change, now by a two-to-one margin over provincial or territorial governments. Cancellation of the national carbon tax and rebate policy appears to have reinforced this public preference, reversing a downward slide dating back to 2021. The federal government is now the more trusted level of government in all regions of the country, with the most notable gains in Western Canada. As before, a plurality of Canadians continues to say they trust both levels of government equally, with this proportion up modestly over the past year), while fewer now say they trust neither.






# Key findings

- Just under **one in two Canadians agree** that “protecting the environment is more important than protecting jobs,” but an equal proportion disagree.
- In British Columbia, the priority given to the environment over jobs has been dropping steadily since 2022. As a result, **the gap between opinions in B.C. and its neighbouring Western provinces has narrowed**. In 2022, British Columbians were much more likely than Albertans to agree that protecting the environment is more important than protecting jobs, whereas today there is essentially no difference in opinion.
- When asked to identify the country’s most important problem today, the public is most likely to name the **rising cost of living, affordable housing or other economic issues**. By comparison, only two percent of Canadians identify the environment or climate change as the country’s single most pressing challenge; this is the lowest percentage recorded since 2019.
- A plurality of Canadians continues to favour a **gradual phase-out of fossil fuels** to address climate change, but over the past year there has been an increasing preference across most of the country for a slower timetable that prioritizes jobs in the oil and gas sector.
- Across the political spectrum, Canadians’ support for a gradual phase-out of fossil fuels continues to be the plurality view, **except among those who voted recently for the federal Conservative Party**, where about half now endorse a jobs-first timetable. But the overall shift since 2024 away from the aggressive timing is evident across all parties, even among those who voted for the Green Party.

*When asked to identify the country’s most important problem today, the public is most likely to name the rising cost of living, affordable housing or other economic issues.*



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- A large, stylized red maple leaf graphic is positioned on the left side of the page, extending from the top to the bottom.
- Among the 10 strategies presented to fight climate change, Canadians continue to be most likely to give a high priority to **ensuring all regions of Canada benefit from a strong economy**, followed by keeping taxes low and making sure our businesses stay competitive with businesses in the USA. However, this year's results also reflect a notable shift since 2021, with an increasing emphasis given to prioritizing economic development and jobs, and less so for those focused on meeting internationally-agreed upon carbon reduction targets.

*The shift in Canadians' emphasis away from strong carbon reduction strategies toward economic development and job protection since 2021 is evident in most parts of the country.*

- The shift in Canadians' emphasis away from strong carbon reduction strategies toward economic development and job protection since 2021 is evident in most parts of the country. But this **movement is most pronounced among residents of British Columbia** and the Atlantic provinces, narrowing the gap between their views and those of people in the oil-producing Prairies.
- In 2025, Canadians are **twice as likely to choose the federal government** as they are to choose their provincial or territorial government as the one they trust more to address climate change. Since 2024, there has been a sharp drop in the proportion who trust neither.

# Climate change policy and the economy

There is a broad consensus that climate change presents an existential threat that requires a whole-society response that inevitably means significant reductions in the carbon emissions that are produced primarily through the burning of fossil fuels. The fundamental challenge remains how to accomplish this without major disruption to the fossil fuel industry on which the country still relies for energy, jobs and economic growth. Governments in Canada and elsewhere have struggled to find policies that strike the necessary balance.

## Environmental versus economic priorities

Canadians remain divided on the relative priority that should be given to protecting the environment versus protecting jobs. The gap in opinions across Western provinces has diminished over the past year as support for environmental protection has increased in Saskatchewan and Alberta, while declining in British Columbia.

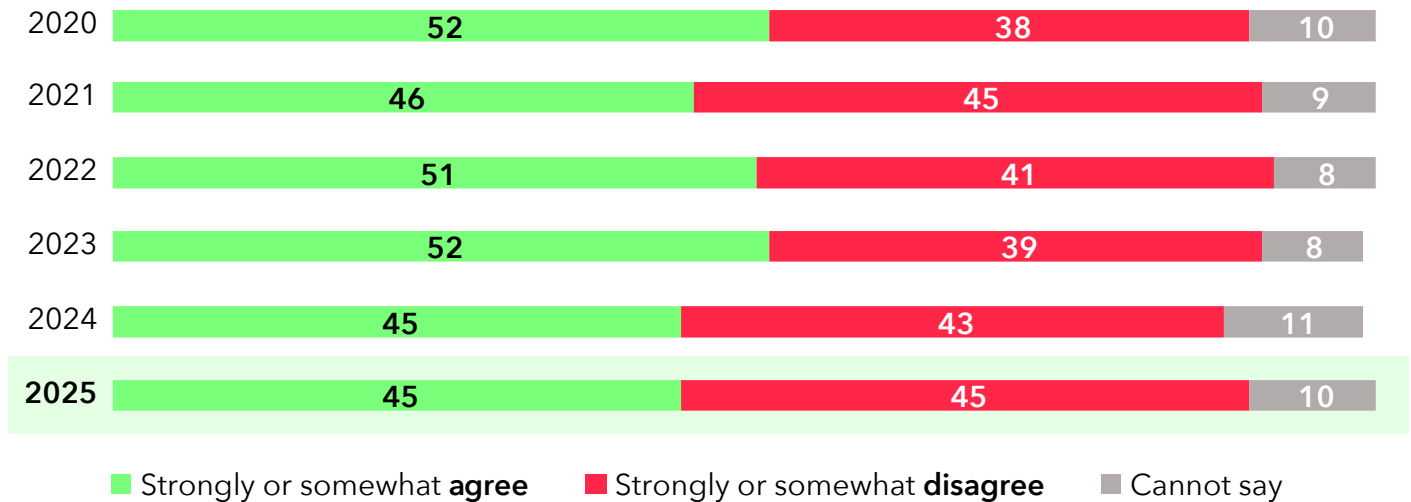
How do Canadians prioritize environment and economic goals as a matter of principle? At the broadest level, these priorities are not necessarily incompatible – but, when asked to choose, the public is evenly divided. Just under half say they strongly (16%) or somewhat (29%) agree with the statement: *protecting the environment is more important than protecting jobs*, compared to an equal proportion who somewhat (29%) or strongly (16%) disagree.

The relative priority given to environmental versus job protection has fluctuated back and forth over a modest range over the years since 2020. The 2025 results are essentially unchanged from the previous year, which marked a drop in support for environmental versus job protection in the previous year (a shift of 6 to 7 percentage points from the former to the latter between 2023 and 2024).

Figure 1

## Agree or disagree? Protecting the environment is more important than protecting jobs

2020 - 2025



*How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? Protecting the environment is more important than protecting jobs.*

As in past years, the relative priority placed on environment versus job protection varies to some degree across the country, with some shifts over the past year. In 2025, public emphasis on prioritizing the environment over jobs is most widely expressed in Ontario (50% strongly or somewhat agree), PEI (46%), New Brunswick (48%) and the North (64%), with this view least evident in Nova Scotia (38%) and Newfoundland & Labrador (36%). The most notable changes over the past year have taken place in Western Canada, with increasing support for environmental protection over jobs in both Saskatchewan (43%, up 11 points) and Alberta (41%, up 6), and declining support in British Columbia (40%, down 7), where priority given to the environment over jobs has been dropping steadily since 2022 (when it stood at 60%).



One result of these changes is a narrowing gap between opinions in B.C. and in its neighbouring Western provinces. In 2022, British Columbians were 14 percentage points more likely than Albertans to agree that protecting the environment is more important than protecting jobs (60%, compared to 46%), whereas today there is essentially no difference (40% to 41%). The gap between agreement in B.C. and in Saskatchewan has similarly disappeared, shifting from plus 22 points (60% compared to 38%) to minus three points (40% to 43%).

Opinions on this question also continue to differ somewhat by age cohort, with priority given to environmental protection most pronounced (and strengthening) among Canadians ages 18 to 24 (55%, up 5 points since 2024), and least so among those ages 45 plus (41%, unchanged). Views are consistent across levels of household income, but increasingly differ when it comes to adequacy of income, with the gap in emphasis on protecting the environment widest among those who have enough and can save from it (54%, up 2), in comparison with those who do not have enough to cover current needs (34%, down 8).

The perspective of Indigenous Peoples continues to stand out, with six in ten (62%) placing environmental over job protection, compared with about half as many (32%) who express the opposite view. However, the Indigenous priority on environment over jobs has declined over the past two years, especially the proportion who strongly agree with this viewpoint (declining from 42% in 2023 to 30% in 2025).

The environment is one of a number of issues that sharply divides Canadians along federal political party support. Agreement with the statement that environmental protection should take precedence over job protection is more common among those who voted in the April 2025 election for the federal Liberal Party (50%), NDP (52%) or Green Party (69%), in comparison with those who supported the federal Conservative Party (33%).

### Canadians say the country's most important problem today:



**26%**

The rising cost of living

**17%**

The challenges posed by U.S. President Donald Trump and the trade war

**11%**

Other economic issues (e.g., unemployment)

## Most important issues facing Canada

This divided perspective on environmental versus economic priorities notwithstanding, the latter remain the predominant top-of-mind concern among Canadians. When asked to identify the country's most important problem today (asked unprompted, with only one response accepted), the public is most likely to name the rising cost of living (26%), affordable housing (9%) or other economic issues (e.g., unemployment) (11%). Others emphasize the challenges now posed by U.S. President Donald Trump and the trade war he is now waging on Canada and other countries (17%).

By comparison, only two percent of Canadians identify the environment or climate change as the country's most pressing challenge; this is the lowest proportion recorded since 2019 (when this research program began), and stands well below the 12 percent recorded in 2020. Moreover, across the country, the environment is not singled out as the top priority by as many as one in ten in any identifiable group, the most prominent being Yukoners (6%), and Canadians who voted for the federal Green Party (6%) or NDP (5%).

Table 1

## Most important problem facing Canadians today

2019 - 2025

Issue	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Cost of living / inflation	8	8	1	8	33	33	26
Trump / U.S. tariffs / trade war	-	-	-	-	-	-	17
Economy / unemployment	17	12	13	9	9	8	11
Affordable housing	-	-	-	-	5	12	9
Health care / mental health	7	9	5	6	10	8	5
Immigration	7	5	1	1	1	4	5
Poor government leadership / Trudeau	9	7	9	6	7	6	4
Environment / climate change	8	12	3	5	4	5	2
Poverty / inequality / homelessness	8	9	6	6	4	3	2
COVID-19	-	1	52	34	-	-	-

*In your opinion, what is the most important problem facing Canadians today?*

## Timetable for phasing out fossil fuels

A plurality of Canadians continues to favour a gradual phase-out of fossil fuels to address climate change – but, over the past year, there has been an increasing preference across most of the country for a slower timetable that prioritizes jobs in the oil and gas sector.

The central policy question today is not if society's reliance on fossil fuels should be reduced, but the timing of this transition. The science indicates that an aggressive timetable is essential to keeping carbon levels below key threshold levels, but such timing must be balanced against the potential disruption to key economic sectors and the downstream impacts on employment and political pushback.



The survey addressed this issue by asking Canadians which of three options they prefer for phasing out fossil fuels like oil and gas, and replacing them with more renewable sources of energy. Current results reveal a general pattern evident each year since this question was first posed in 2020, but the latest results point to a shift in public preference toward slowing the timing of a fossil fuel phase-out in order to protect jobs.

Of the three options presented, a clear plurality (45%) of Canadians continues to support the middle one, which entails a gradual phase-out of fossil fuels so that people in affected industries are not suddenly put out of work. Preference for this option has declined modestly over the past year (down 3 percentage points), and is now at its lowest level since 2020.

About three in ten (29%) Canadians now endorse the policy that reflects the slowest timetable for carbon emission reductions, which entails “not worrying so much about phasing out” fossil fuels and instead focusing on job protection for those in the oil and gas industry. Support for this option has strengthened over the past year (up 5 points) and is now at its highest level since 2020. In comparison, fewer than half as many (14%) now support for the option in which fossil fuels are phased out “as quickly as possible”, even if it means putting people out of work. This proportion has declined over the past year (down 3 points) and is now at its lowest recorded level.

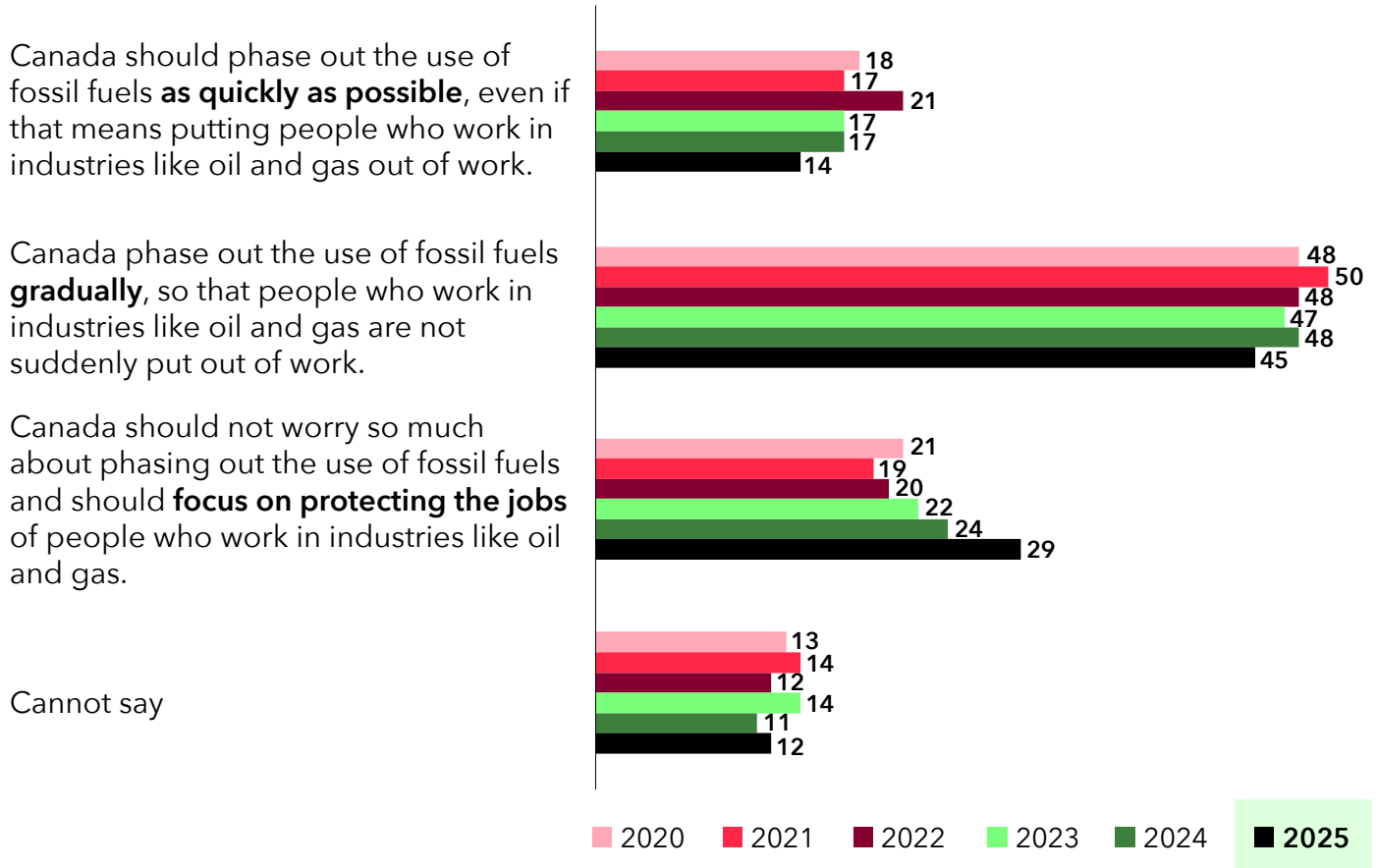




Figure 2

## How quickly should Canada phase out fossil fuels?

2020 - 2025



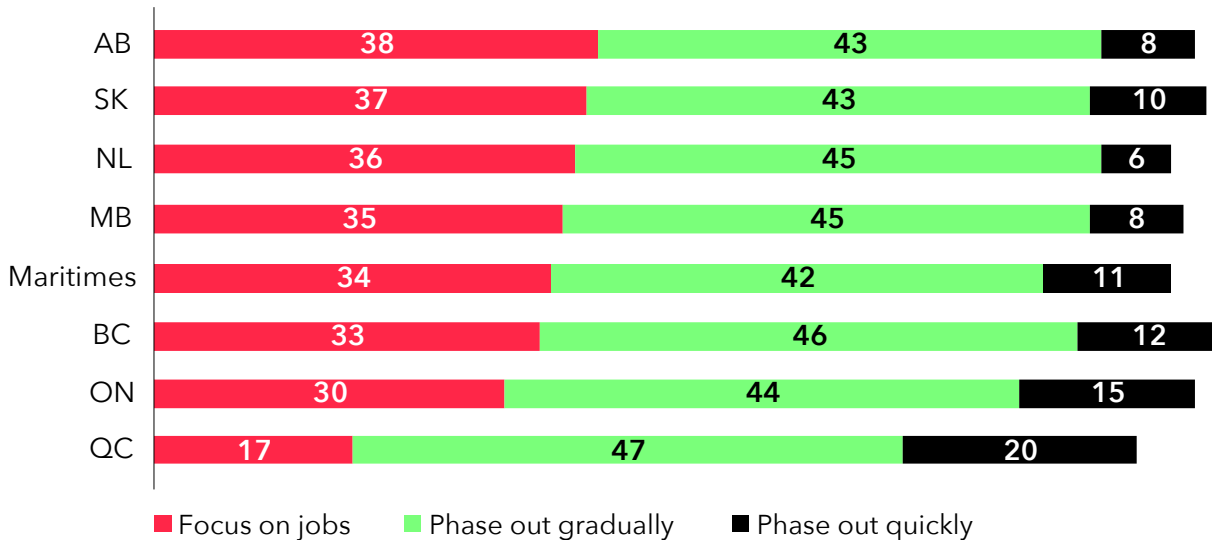
*Some people say that in order to fight climate change, countries like Canada should phase out the use of fossil fuels like oil and gas, and should replace them with more renewable sources of energy. Thinking about this, which of the following three options do you prefer?*

The middle option of a gradual phase-out of fossil fuels continues to be the plurality view across most of the country, with a decline in support since 2024 showing up most clearly in Ontario (44%, down 6 points) and Nova Scotia (39%, down 11). Support for a “go slow – protect jobs” policy has increased everywhere – except in Alberta (down 2), PEI (down 5) and Saskatchewan (down 6) – and most noticeably in B.C. (up 7), Manitoba (up 8), Nova Scotia (up 10) and New Brunswick (up 13).

Figure 3

## How quickly should Canada phase out fossil fuels?

2025, by province or region



*Some people say that in order to fight climate change, countries like Canada should phase out the use of fossil fuels like oil and gas, and should replace them with more renewable sources of energy. Thinking about this, which of the following three options do you prefer?*

Public support for a quick phase-out of fossil fuels is the least favoured option everywhere except in Quebec, where it has also lost ground over the past year (20%, down 6 points). Support for this policy has declined over the past year everywhere except Saskatchewan (10%, up 3 points), and now is least apt to receive support in Newfoundland & Labrador (6%), PEI (7%) and Alberta (8%).

As in the past, younger Canadians are somewhat more likely than their older counterparts to favour an aggressive timetable for phasing out fossil fuels. But, over the past year, this gap has narrowed and the preference for going slow has strengthened among Canadians in all age cohorts.

Across the political spectrum, Canadians' support for a gradual phase-out of fossil fuels continues to be the plurality view, except among those who voted recently for the federal Conservative Party, where close to half (49%) now endorse a jobs-first timetable, compared with those who support the middle (35%) or aggressive (8%) phase-out options. But the overall shift since 2024 away from the aggressive timing is evident across all parties, even among those who voted for the Green Party (24%, down 8 points from 2024).



# Priorities in addressing climate change

Canadians most widely agree on climate policies that prioritize all regions benefitting from a strong economy, keeping taxes low and being competitive with U.S. businesses. Since 2021, the public increasingly favours policies that protect the economy over those meeting carbon reduction targets, especially in B.C. and Atlantic Canada.

The survey expanded the scope of policy considerations by asking Canadians to rate each of 10 broad strategies as a high, medium or low priority for the country to pursue in addressing climate change.

The extent to which Canadians assign a high priority to these strategies varies widely, as was the case in 2020 and 2021. This year's results reflect a notable shift since 2021, revealing an increasing emphasis given to prioritizing economic development and jobs, and less so for those focused on meeting carbon reduction targets.

Among the 10 strategies presented, Canadians continue to be most likely to give a high priority to:

- **Ensuring all regions of Canada benefit from a strong economy** (60%, down 2 points from 2021)
- **Keeping taxes low** (51%, up 5)
- **Making sure our businesses stay competitive with businesses in the USA** (47%, up 2).



**Among the 10 climate strategies presented, Canadians give a high priority to:**

**60%**

Ensuring all regions of Canada benefit from a strong economy

**51%**

Keeping taxes low

**47%**

Making sure our businesses stay competitive with businesses in the USA

Table 2

## Priorities in developing a strategy to fight climate change

High priority, 2020 – 2025

Item	2020	2021	2025
Ensuring that all regions of Canada benefit from a strong economy	60	62	60
Keeping taxes low	50	46	51
Making sure our businesses stay competitive with businesses in the United States	46	45	47
Making sure that the premiers of all the provinces and territories are in agreement with Canada's climate change strategy	43	38	39
Preventing job losses in the oil and gas industry	33	31	37
Increasing Canadian exports of resources like natural gas to other countries so they can phase out their use of less clean energy sources like coal	32	34	36
Setting a good example for other countries around the world	40	35	32
Meeting the greenhouse gas reduction targets that Canada agreed to in international agreements like the Paris Agreement on Climate Change	40	41	31
Minimizing government interference in the free market economy	22	19	25
Ending our reliance on fossil fuels like oil and gas as quickly as possible	28	27	21

*In developing a strategy to fight climate change, do you think that each of the following should be a high priority, a medium priority, a low priority or not a priority at all for Canada?*

More than one in three Canadians identify as a high priority three other strategies that focus on political consensus, job protection or trade opportunities, including:

- **Making sure the premiers of all provinces and territories are in agreement with Canada's climate change strategy** (39%, up 1)
- **Preventing job losses in the oil and gas industry** (37%, up 6)
- **Increasing Canadian exports of resources like natural gas to other countries so they can phase out their use of less clean energy sources like coal** (36%, up 2).

A smaller and declining proportion of Canadians prioritize climate change strategies that consider the country's approach in an international context, including:

- **Setting a good example for other countries around the world** (32%, down 3)
- **Meeting the greenhouse gas reduction targets that Canada agreed to in international agreements** (e.g., Paris Agreement on Climate Change) (31%, down 10).

As was the case in 2021, Canadians are least likely to prioritize the two climate strategies that are most extreme in their scope, including:

- **A pro-business approach of minimizing government interference in the free market economy** (25%, up 6)
- **A pro-environment position of ending our reliance on fossil fuels like oil and gas as quickly as possible** (21%, down 6).

The reversal of the gap in the relative support for these two sharply contrasting policies further reflects the broader shift in public sentiment from environmental to economic priorities.

As in previous years, the overall ranking of climate change priorities is broadly similar across regions. In each, the highest priority continues to be given to such areas as ensuring all regions benefit equally from a strong economy, keeping taxes low and ensuring Canadians businesses can compete with the USA. And, typically, support for policies supporting the oil and gas industry is more widespread in Saskatchewan and Alberta, and less so in Quebec.

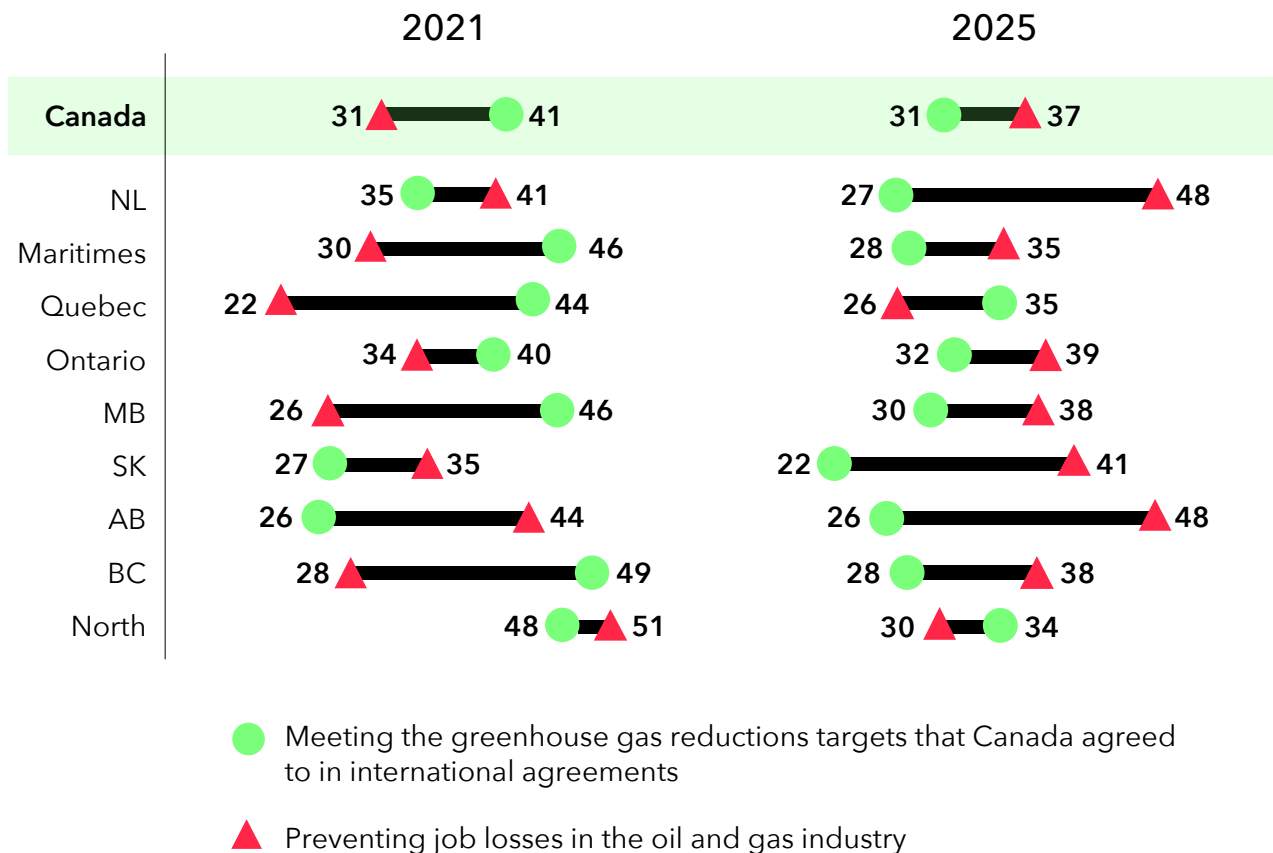
Notably, the shift in Canadians' emphasis away from strong carbon reduction strategies toward economic development and job protection since 2021 is evident in most parts of the country. But this movement is most pronounced among residents of British Columbia and the Atlantic provinces, narrowing the gap between their views and those of people in the oil-producing Prairies.

This broad trend can best be illustrated by highlighting how opinions have changed on two strategies that have in recent years been most at odds: Meeting greenhouse gas emission targets to meet international agreements versus preventing job losses in the oil and gas industry. For the country as a whole in 2021, Canadians were more likely to place a high priority on the former (meeting emission targets) over the latter (preventing job loss) by plus 10 percentage points. In 2025, this net figure changed to minus 6 (reflecting a shift of 16 points in the direction of favouring job protection over meeting climate targets). Across regions, this net shift since 2021 is most dramatic in B.C. (31 points in the direction of protecting jobs), Atlantic Canada (25 points) and Manitoba (27 points). People in these regions are now more likely than in 2021 to agree with residents in the oil-producing provinces of Saskatchewan (net change of 7 points) and Alberta (4 points).

Figure 4

### Contrasting priorities in developing a strategy to fight climate change (high priority)

2021 & 2025



# Trust in governments in addressing climate change

Canadians continue to be twice as likely to trust the federal government more than their provincial or territorial government in addressing climate change. This preference has strengthened over the past year, primarily in Western Canada and likely in response to the cancellation of Ottawa's federal carbon tax earlier in the year.

Climate change is a collective challenge, but the lead on policy is shared by the federal and provincial governments, who have proceeded mostly independently and, in some cases, at odds with one another. The federal government under Justin Trudeau adopted several new climate reduction policies, most notably a federal carbon pricing regimen that applied to all provinces and territories that did not have their own pricing policy in place. This policy became popularly known as a carbon "tax" (despite being revenue neutral) and was met with stiff opposition by some provincial governments, as well as the federal Conservative Party. When Mark Carney became Prime Minister in early 2025, one of his first decisions was to cancel the federal carbon pricing policy, which was broadly viewed as a major political liability in the lead-up to the upcoming federal election.

What confidence do Canadians currently have in their federal and provincial/territorial governments in addressing climate change - which level of government do they trust more on this issue? In 2025, Canadians are twice as likely to choose the federal government (26%) as their provincial or territorial government (14%). These results reflect a small rebound in confidence in Ottawa (up 3 points since 2024) and reverses a downward trend in this view dating back to 2021 - likely due in part to the cancellation of the heavily politicized federal carbon tax.

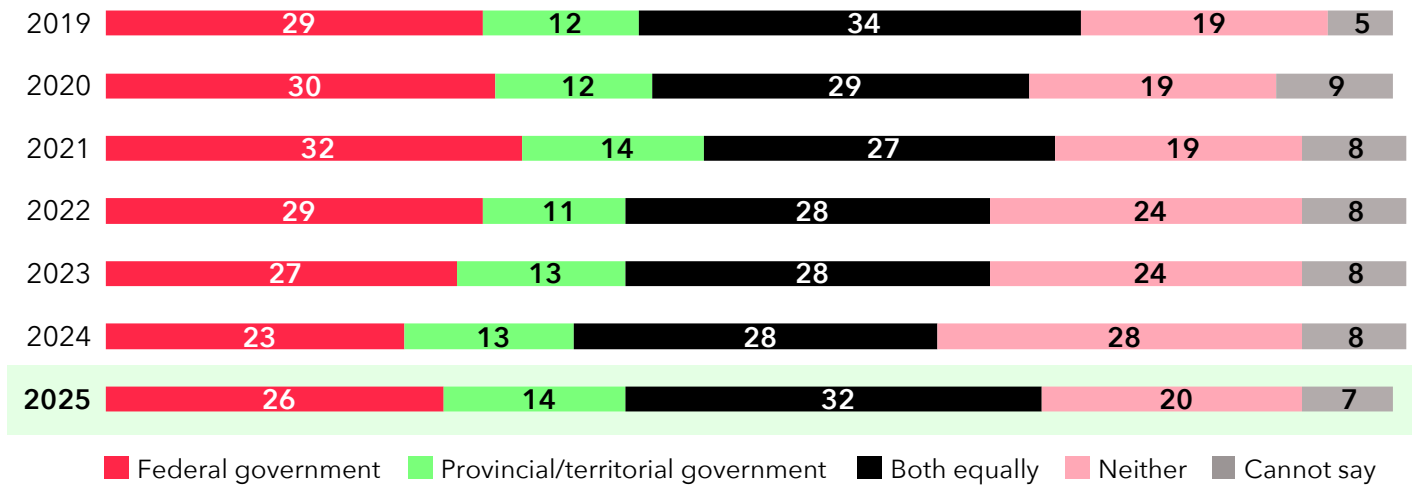
As in most years, a plurality of Canadians continue to say they trust both levels of government equally on addressing climate change (32%, up 4), while there has been a sharp drop in the proportion who trust neither (20%, down 8). At the national level, opinions on this question have shifted somewhat year-by-year, but the general sentiment has held largely steady.



Figure 5

## Which government do you trust more to address climate change?

2019 - 2025



*Which government do you trust more to make the right decisions in the following areas:  
Addressing climate change?*

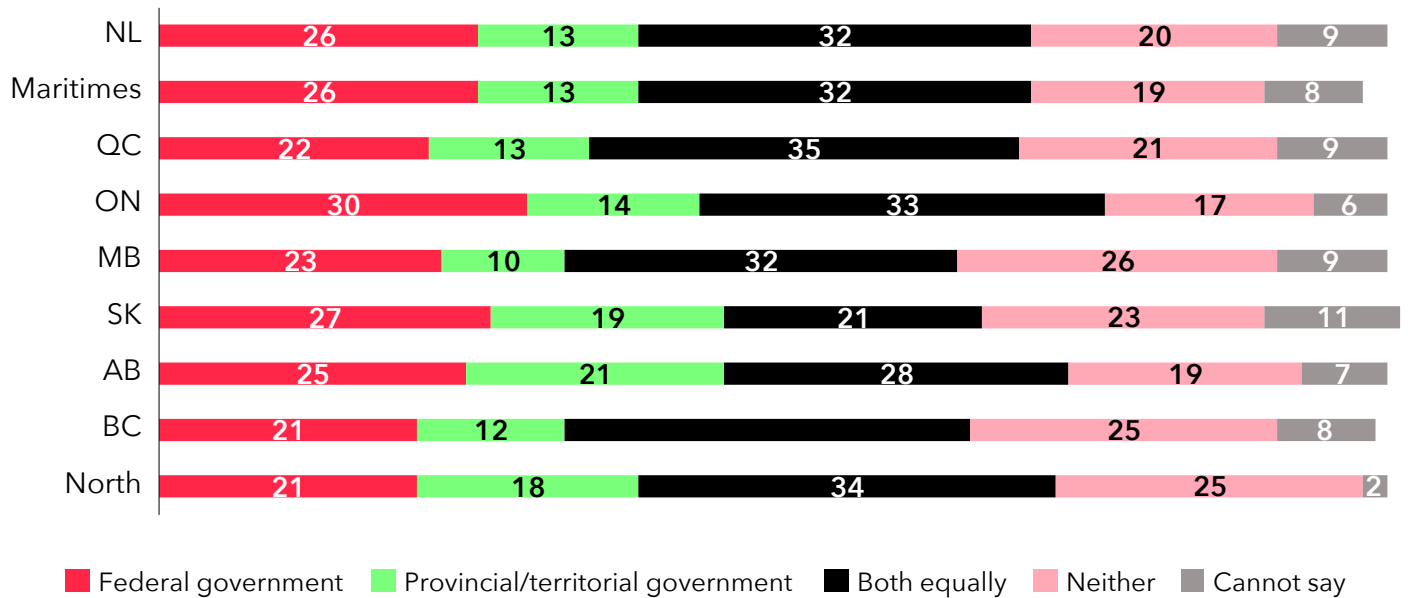
The federal government is now seen as the more trusted level of government in all regions of the country, including the Prairie provinces, where opposition to federal climate policies has been most intense. The cancellation of the federal carbon tax is likely behind increasing trust in the federal government in Western Canada, including Saskatchewan (27%, up 9), Alberta (25%, up 5) and B.C. (21%, up 8). By comparison, trust in Ottawa on climate change has changed little over the past year in central Canada, the Maritimes and the North.

Canadians' relative level of trust in their provincial or territorial government on climate change has shifted up or down in each jurisdiction by only a few percentage points since 2024. This view continues to be strongest in Saskatchewan (19%, down 4) and Alberta (21%, down 1), and least evident in Manitoba (10%, down 2) and B.C. (12%, down 3). Notably, the proportion of Canadians who say they trust *neither* level of government has declined in all regions (except the North) over the past year, but most significantly in Alberta (19%, down 12) and Ontario (17%, down 11). This lack of trust in both levels of government on climate policy is now most likely to be expressed in Manitoba (26%), B.C. (25%) and the North (25%).

Figure 6

## Which government do you trust more to address climate change?

By province or region, 2025



Which government do you trust more to make the right decisions in the following areas:  
Addressing climate change?





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