

# Canadians' Opinions on Climate Policy and Federal Leadership

October 2016

**SUMMARY REPORT**

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## Overview

This fall, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will be meeting with all provincial and territorial premiers to discuss a new national plan to address climate change. In anticipation of that negotiation, Clean Energy Canada commissioned Nanos Research to conduct a survey of Canadians' opinions on energy and climate issues, including specific policies under consideration and the federal government's role in implementing a national plan.

## Survey Questions and Results

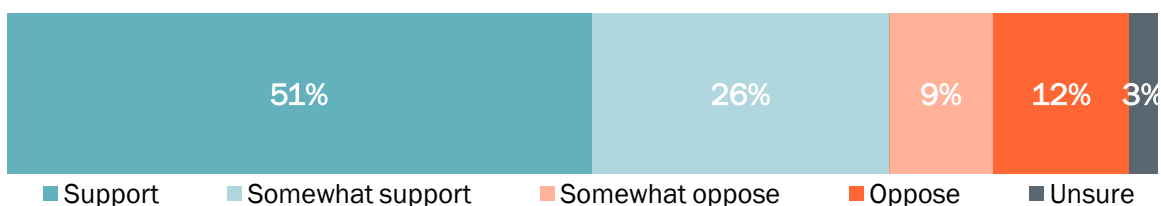
The results for seven survey questions are presented below, along with the exact question wording that was used, and more results will be published in the coming weeks. A total of 1,000 Canadians were surveyed, and the margin of error for the full sample is  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20. More details about the survey methodology are available at the end of this document. The percentages in descriptions and figures may not always add up to 100% due to rounding.

### CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY AND THE ECONOMY

Canada has committed to reduce its carbon emissions to 30% below the 2005 level by 2030. Canada has also signed the Paris Agreement, the purpose of which is to reduce global emissions sufficiently to keep global warming well below two degrees Celsius.

Along with provincial and territorial leaders, the federal government has committed to adopting a national plan capable of meeting Canada's climate target. Survey respondents are broadly supportive of having a national plan to reduce emissions and reach our climate targets: 77% support or somewhat support having such a plan, with 21% opposed or somewhat opposed.

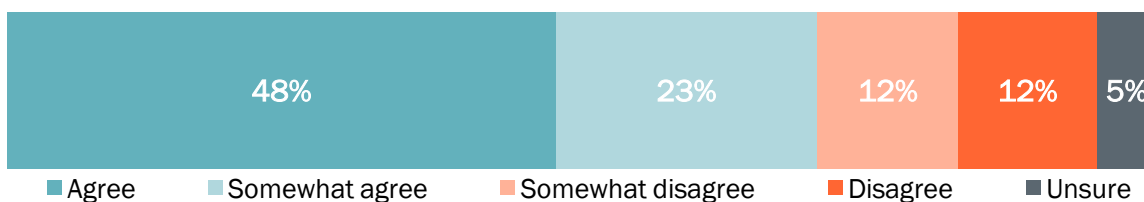
***Do you support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or oppose the following? Having a national plan that will ensure we reach our international targets to reduce emissions from burning fossil fuels such as coal, oil and natural gas.***



This survey also repeated a question from a [previous Nanos survey](#), to gauge the general mood around the economic impacts of climate change. A substantial majority (70%) of Canadians agree or somewhat agree that climate change is a threat to Canada's economic future. That is roughly the

same as last November's result (73% combined) with the difference being within the survey's margin of error.

***Do you agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or disagree with the following statement? A changing climate presents a significant threat to our economic future.***

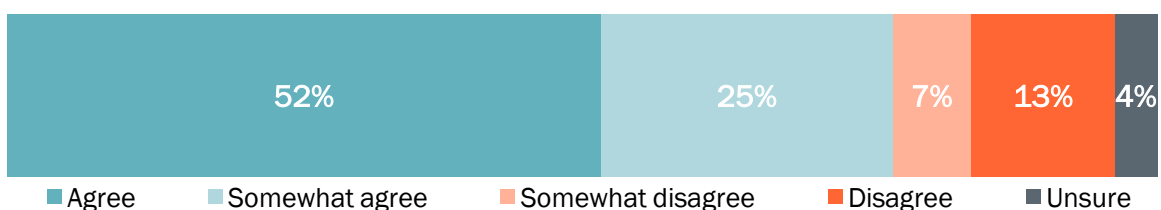


## FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS

The federal government has signalled that it wants to address climate change through a collaborative approach with the provinces and territories, recognizing that many of them have already introduced climate policies and taken action. This approach implies that provincial, territorial and federal governments share responsibility for achieving Canada's national climate target.

The survey tested this notion of shared responsibility through two questions, and it appears to align with the views of most Canadians. A large majority of respondents believe that their home province has an important responsibility to cut emissions in order to meet Canada's 2030 target: 77% agree or somewhat agree. One-fifth (20%) of respondents disagree or somewhat disagree.

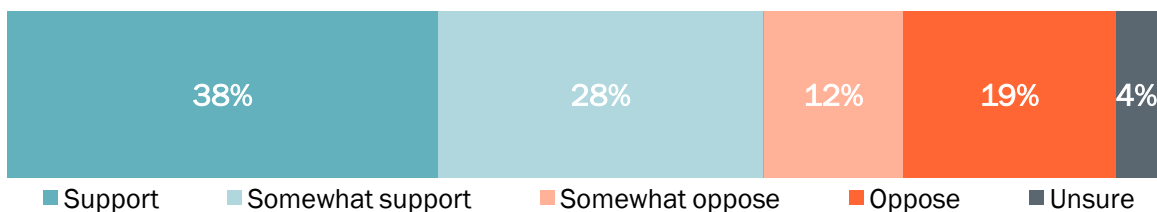
***Do you agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or disagree with the following statement? My province has an important responsibility to reduce carbon emissions by 2030 to help Canada achieve its national climate change commitments.***



However, what if the actions taken by the provinces, when added together, are not enough to reduce emissions by the required amount? In that case, the federal government could potentially step in to close the gap.

The survey tested whether Canadians support that role for the federal government. Roughly two-thirds of Canadians believe the federal government should act in that situation (66% support or somewhat support), so that Canada can achieve its national target, with slightly less than one-third (31%) opposed or somewhat opposed.

***Do you support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or oppose the following? Having the federal government take action on its own to meet national climate change targets, if the climate change action that provinces and territories are taking on their own doesn't add up to Canada's national target.***

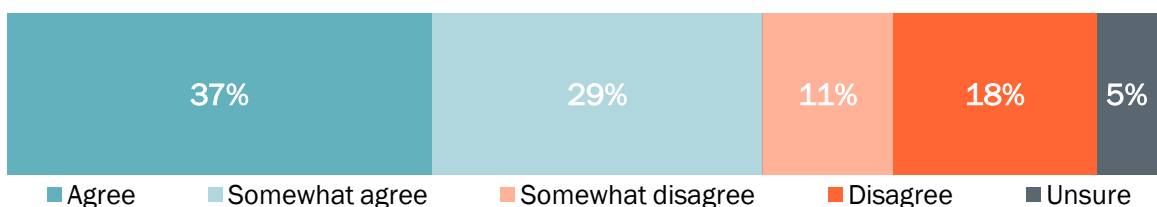


In March, all of Canada's first ministers met and released the "Vancouver Declaration" on clean growth and climate change. The premiers and the prime minister agreed to meet again later this year to develop a national climate plan with specific actions, which they would start to implement in 2017.

There has been some public disagreement among the premiers, the prime minister and other ministers over what specific action (and how much) is needed to meet Canada's climate commitments. This raises the prospect that all premiers and the federal government may not reach unanimous agreement at their meeting this fall — despite their earlier commitment to produce a national plan together.

When asked about this situation, most respondents do not appear to view unanimity as essential. A majority (66%) agree or somewhat agree that producing a national plan to meet Canada's climate targets is more important than having unanimous agreement on that plan. A minority (29%) of respondents disagree or somewhat disagree.

***Do you agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or disagree with the following statement? Having a plan to meet Canada's climate change targets to reduce emissions from burning fossil fuels such as coal, oil and natural gas is more important than having all provincial and territorial premiers agree with the plan.***

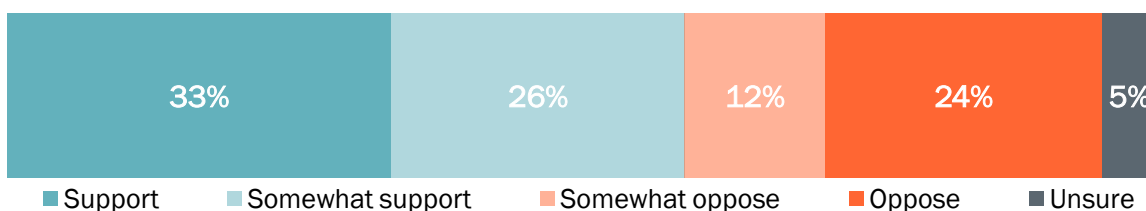


## CARBON PRICING

In the discussion of a pan-Canadian response to climate change, perhaps the single most-discussed policy has been carbon pricing. Four provinces — which account for more than 80% of Canada's population — currently have or are introducing some form of carbon pricing, either through a carbon tax or a cap-and-trade system.

The survey asked respondents about their support for putting a price on carbon as a way to reduce emissions. A majority (59%) of respondents support or somewhat support a price, with a smaller group (36%) opposed or somewhat opposed.

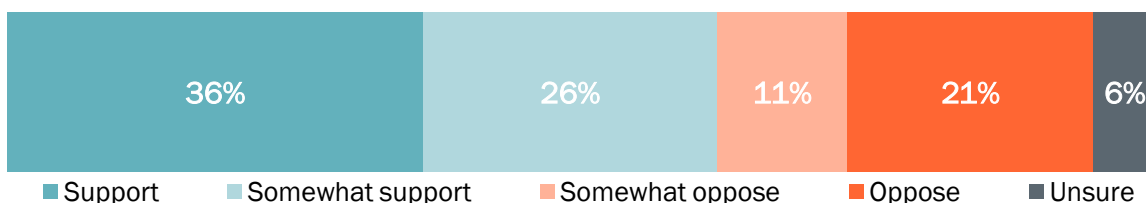
**Do you support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or oppose the following? Having a price on carbon to reduce the use of fossil fuels such as coal, oil or natural gas.**



Because not all provinces and territories have adopted carbon pricing to date, the federal government could set a minimum (or “floor”) price on carbon. A minimum price would ensure that emitters pay for the carbon they release, regardless of what province or territory they are located in. Such a floor price could apply to provinces and territories that either have not adopted their own carbon prices, or where the price on carbon is lower than the national “floor” price.

The survey found that most Canadians favour the idea of a national minimum price on carbon: 62% support or somewhat support such a policy, with 33% opposed or somewhat opposed.

**Do you support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or oppose the following? Establishing a minimum price on carbon emissions across Canada, so companies and individuals pay for the emissions they produce regardless of what province or territory they are in.**



## Methodology

Nanos Research conducted a random-digit-dialling, dual-frame (land- and cell-lines) hybrid telephone and online survey of 1,000 Canadians, 18 years of age or older. The survey was conducted between September 24 and 27, 2016. Participants were randomly recruited by telephone using live agents and administered a survey online. The results were statistically checked and weighted by age and gender using the latest Census information and the sample is geographically stratified to be representative of Canada. The margin of error is  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Questions about support for or opposition to policies were asked in randomized order, and the battery of questions was introduced with the following preamble: “This fall the provincial and territorial governments and the Prime Minister are getting together to discuss a plan to meet Canada's climate change targets. Do you support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or oppose the following?”

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### ABOUT CLEAN ENERGY CANADA

Clean Energy Canada works to accelerate Canada's transition to a clean and renewable energy system. We collaborate with civil society, governments and the private sector to build awareness and support for solutions that address climate disruption and foster an energy efficient, environmentally responsible and prosperous economy.

Clean Energy Canada is an initiative of the Centre for Dialogue at Simon Fraser University.