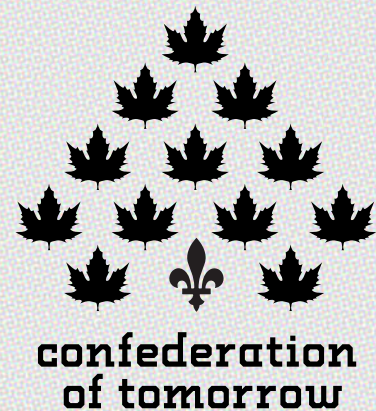


# Addressing climate change in the Canadian federation



A REPORT FROM  
THE CONFEDERATION  
OF TOMORROW  
2021 SURVEY OF CANADIANS

**Final Report**

JUNE 2021

**Environics  
Institute**  
For Survey Research

**CANADAWEST  
FOUNDATION**

  
CENTRE D'ANALYSE POLITIQUE  
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The **Confederation of Tomorrow** surveys are annual studies conducted by an association of the country's leading public policy organizations: the **EnviroNics Institute for Survey Research**, the **Canada West Foundation**, the **Centre D'Analyse Politique – Constitution et Fédéralisme**, the **Institute for Research on Public Policy**, the **Brian Mulroney Institute of Government** and the **Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy**. The surveys give voice to Canadians about the major issues shaping the future of the federation and their political communities. The 2021 study consists of a survey of 5,814 adults, conducted online in the provinces between January 25 and February 17; and online and by telephone in the territories between January 25 and March 1. Survey results are weighted by region, gender, age, language, education, immigrant background and Indigenous identity to ensure they are representative of the country as a whole. When results are reported for the territories (individually or combined), these are weighted separately to ensure they are representative of that region.

# Executive summary

Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change had emerged as one of Canadians' top concerns. The situation a year later is completely different: naturally, the pandemic now eclipses all other issues as the one Canadians see as most important. This change notwithstanding, most Canadians remain supportive of policies to address climate change, including the eventual phasing out of the use of fossil fuels in favour of more renewable sources of energy. At the same time, support for the federal government's handling of the issue has grown over the past two years in each of the provinces at the forefront of the court challenge to the federal carbon pricing policy. Moreover, opinions on the climate change issue remain divided not just between regions of the country, but also within provinces and regions.

## The environment and the economy

Canadians are evenly split on the question of whether protecting the environment is more important than protecting jobs. The proportion agreeing that protecting the environment is more important, however, is slightly lower today than in early 2020 (prior to the onset of the pandemic) in every province and territory, except Nova Scotia.

In most provinces, the proportion agreeing that protecting the environment is more important than protecting jobs is relatively close to the national average, indicating that there is little regional difference on this question. There are two exceptions: agreement is noticeably higher than average in Nova Scotia, and noticeably lower in Alberta. Agreement with the notion that protecting the environment is more important than protecting jobs also remains higher than average in the three territories.

## Options to fight climate change: phasing out fossil fuels?

In every part of the country, at least a plurality favours an approach that involves a gradual phase-out of fossil fuels to

address climate change. Fewer favour either a more rapid phase-out of fossil fuels even if that means putting people who work in industries like oil and gas out of work, or not worrying so much about phasing out the use of fossil fuels in order to protect jobs in industries like oil and gas. On this question, there has been no significant change in view over the past year.

While a gradual phase-out of fossil fuels is the most popular option in each region of the country, there are differences in terms of the *second* preference. Quebec is the only province where the second most popular option is phasing out the use of fossil fuels as quickly as possible. In both Ontario and B.C., the options of not worrying so much about phasing out the use of fossil fuels, and of phasing out the use of fossil fuels as quickly as possible, receive more or less equal support. Support for the option of not worrying so much about phasing out the use of fossil fuels is much higher in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

There is also a significant and familiar difference in views among the supporters of the main federal political parties. Clear majorities of supporters of the Liberal Party, the NDP, the Green Party and the Bloc Québécois favour the phasing out of fossil fuels to address climate change, with some difference of opinion as to whether that phase-out should occur gradually or quickly. By contrast, Conservative Party supporters are much more divided on the question of whether the priority should be the phasing out of fossil fuels at all.

But it is not sufficient to observe that climate change divides Canadians by region and party affiliation. It is also important to recognize significant regional differences among supporters of the right-leaning or conservative parties across different parts of the country. In addition, the extent of the partisan differences varies considerably within regions. These partisan differences are least evident in Quebec, much more visible in Ontario and B.C., and most acute in Saskatchewan and especially Alberta. While, on average, Albertans have

different preferences on this issue than Quebecers, Alberta itself is also internally divided between those on the left and the right of the political spectrum.

## Priorities in fighting climate change

As in 2020, in 2021 there are both areas of agreement and disagreement across the country on what should be a priority in developing a strategy to fight climate change.

On the one hand, in each region, the item most likely to be seen as a top priority is keeping all regional economies strong. Keeping taxes low is also among the top three priorities in each region. At the other end of the scale, minimizing government interference in the free market economy is either the lowest or second lowest priority in each region.

On the other hand, there are significant differences as to whether meeting international greenhouse gas reduction targets, or preventing job losses in the oil and gas industry, should be a priority. Meeting international greenhouse gas reduction targets is among the top four priorities in each region, with the notable exceptions of Newfoundland and Labrador, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Conversely, preventing job losses in the oil and gas industry is near the bottom of the list in Quebec, Manitoba and B.C., but a much higher priority in Newfoundland and Labrador, Alberta and the North.

These differences are not ones that pit the West against the rest of the country, as some of the biggest differences of opinion on this question lie within the West itself (for example, between Alberta, on the one hand, and Manitoba and B.C., on the other). Those most likely to agree that protecting jobs in the oil and gas sector should be a high priority in developing a strategy to fight climate change are residents of the North, Alberta, and Newfoundland and Labrador. Those least likely to agree are residents of Quebec, Manitoba and B.C.

## Trust in federal and provincial governments

Currently, one in three Canadians trust the federal government *more* to make the right decisions in addressing climate change; while just over one in four trust the federal government and their provincial or territorial government equally. One in five trust neither government, and fewer trust their provincial or territorial government *more*.

Notably, since 2019, the proportion trusting the federal government *more* to make the right decisions in addressing climate change has increased in each of the provinces at the forefront of the court challenge to the federal policy on carbon pricing. This increase is largest in Saskatchewan and Alberta.

The public's trust is more evenly distributed in the case of managing energy resources, with roughly one in four trusting their provincial or territorial government more, trusting both governments equally, or trusting the federal government more. Once again, there have been changes over time within individual provinces, notably in Alberta and Saskatchewan. In Alberta, the proportion trusting the federal government more in managing energy resources has tripled since 2019. While Albertans and Saskatchewanians remain much more likely to trust their provincial government more in this area than they are to trust the federal government more, in both provinces the gap between the proportion trusting their provincial government more and that trusting the federal government more has narrowed over the past two years.

## Confidence in leaders

Canadians are more likely to have confidence in the leaders of environmental groups than in business leaders or political leaders. Confidence in leaders of environmental groups is highest in the North, in Quebec and in Atlantic Canada. Confidence in each of these three types of leaders (environmental, business and political) is lower in Alberta than in any other province or territory.

In terms of changes over time, Quebec and Alberta offer the most striking contrast. In the mid-2000s, Albertans were the most likely to express confidence in both political leaders and business leaders, and Quebecers were the least likely to do so. In 2021, the positions have reversed: today, Quebecers are the most likely to have confidence in these leaders, and Albertans the least likely.

## Confidence in leaders of environmental groups: widening divides

Confidence in leaders of environmental groups declined between 2002 and 2021, but the extent of this decline has not been uniform across different segments of the population. While there has been very little change in

confidence in leaders of environmental groups among supporters of the federal Liberal Party, confidence in these leaders among Conservative Party supporters is lower today than it was in 2002 among both PC Party supporters and supporters of the Canadian Alliance. Confidence in leaders of environmental groups has also declined among NDP supporters. As a result, the divide in views on environmental leaders between supporters of the federal governing and opposition parties is much wider today than it was two decades ago. As climate change has moved to the forefront of the public agenda, the issue of the environment has become more partisan, and thus more divisive or polarized.

Finally, while confidence in leaders of environmental groups is lower in Alberta than elsewhere in the country, this should not overshadow the fact that there are significant differences of opinion within provinces as well. These differences are greater within Alberta than elsewhere in Canada. For instance, the difference between the level of confidence in environmental leaders expressed by Albertans who place themselves on the left and right of the political spectrum is roughly twice the size of the left-right gap in neighbouring B.C. and Saskatchewan; it is also much bigger than the left-right gap in central Canada.

# Introduction: shifting priorities?

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change had emerged as one of Canadians’ top concerns.<sup>1</sup> The situation a year later is completely different. At the time of the Confederation of Tomorrow 2021 survey, in February, one in two (52%) Canadians cited the pandemic as the most important problem facing Canadians today, and 13 percent mentioned the economy or unemployment. Climate change was mentioned by only three percent.

The fact that the pandemic has eclipsed climate change as the *most important* problem facing the country does not mean that Canadians are no longer concerned about the changing climate. In the context of the pandemic, however, Canadians’ views on how best to respond to climate change may nonetheless be evolving. It could be that, in the midst of an economic recession, fewer Canadians feel that the

trade-offs associated with a more ambitious climate change policy are affordable. Conversely, perhaps Canadians are more inclined to see the disruption caused by the pandemic, and the pending re-build, as an opportunity to put in place the policies needed to ensure a more rapid transition to a post-carbon economy.

This report from the Confederation of Tomorrow 2021 Survey of Canadians explores how attitudes about climate change and energy resources have been evolving. The survey finds that, while there has been very little change in views on how best to address climate change, there has been some shift in support on the issue in favour of the federal government, particularly in those provinces whose provincial governments have been most vocally opposed to the federal stance on carbon pricing.

**Table 1:**  
**Most important problem facing Canadians today?**  
 Top mentions (%) 2019 - 2021

| Issue                                     | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|---|------|------|------|
| COVID-19                                  | –    | 1    | 52   |
| Economy / unemployment                    | 17   | 12   | 13   |
| Poor government leadership / Trudeau      | 9    | 7    | 9    |
| Poverty / inequality / affordable housing | 8    | 9    | 6    |
| Health care / mental health               | 7    | 9    | 5    |
| Environment / climate change              | 8    | 12   | 3    |
| Cost of living                            | 8    | 8    | 1    |
| Immigration                               | 7    | 5    | 1    |

Q.2  
*In your opinion, what is the most important problem facing Canadians today? (Open-ended)*

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance: Environics Institute for Survey Research, *Regional Perspectives on Politics and Priorities* (2019); <https://www.environicsinstitute.org/projects/project-details/regional-perspectives-on-politics-and-priorities>; Environics Institute for Survey Research, *Regional Perspectives on the Economy and Climate Change* (2020); <https://www.environicsinstitute.org/projects/project-details/confederation-of-tomorrow-2020-survey-of-canadians-regional-perspectives-on-the-economy-and-climate-change>.

# The environment and the economy

The proportion of Canadians agreeing that protecting the environment is more important than protecting jobs is down slightly from early 2020 (prior to the onset of the pandemic).

Canadians are evenly split on the question of whether protecting the environment is more important than protecting jobs: 46 percent agree that protecting the environment is more important, while 45 percent disagree.

The proportion in agreement is down slightly from early 2020 (prior to the onset of the pandemic): at that time, 52 percent agreed, and 38 percent disagreed. The proportion in agreement in 2021 is lower than in 2020 in every province and territory, except for Nova Scotia, where it has increased slightly.

In most provinces, the proportion agreeing that protecting the environment is more important than protecting jobs is relatively close to the national average, indicating that there is little regional difference on this question. There are two exceptions: agreement is noticeably higher than average in Nova Scotia (55%), and noticeably lower in Alberta (36%).

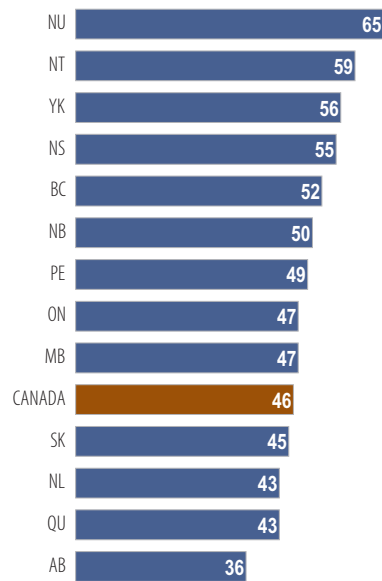
Agreement with the notion that protecting the environment is more important than protecting jobs is also higher than average in the three territories (60%). However, it was even higher in that region in 2020 (74%); thus the decline in agreement is more pronounced in the North than in any other region.

The decline in agreement between 2020 and 2021 is slightly more pronounced among some demographic groups than others; for instance, it has declined a little bit more among men compared to women, and among those age 55 and older compared to younger age groups. The decline is especially noticeable among older men: there has been a 12-point drop in agreement among men age 55 and older (from 51% to 39%).

As expected, among supporters of the main federal political parties, agreement that protecting the environment is more important than protecting jobs is highest among supporters of the Green Party (68%), higher than average among supporters of the Liberal Party (58%) and the NDP (57%),

## Protecting the environment is more important than protecting jobs

Strongly or somewhat agree, by province or territory

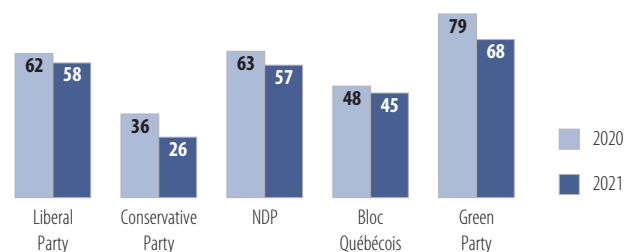


Q.5d

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

## Protecting the environment is more important than protecting jobs

2020 – 2021, strongly or somewhat agree, by federal party support



Q.5d

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

somewhat lower among supporters of the Bloc Québécois (45%), and lowest among supporters of the Conservative Party (26%). The decline in agreement since 2020 is larger than average among supporters of the Conservative Party (down 10 points), but also among supporters of the Green Party (down 11 points).

# Options to fight climate change: phasing out fossil fuels?

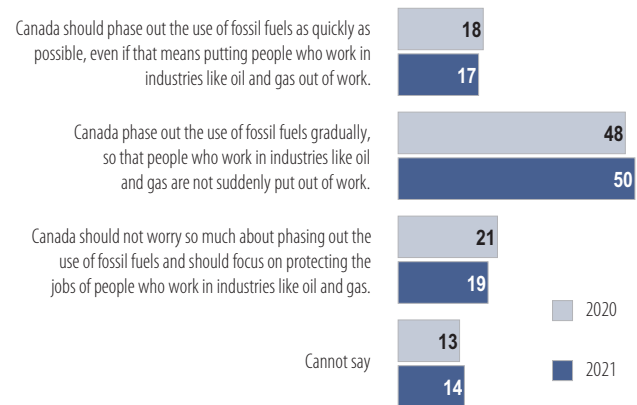
In every part of the country, at least a plurality favours a gradual phase-out of fossil fuels to address climate change; and a majority favours an approach that involves the phasing out of fossil fuels, either gradually or quickly. At the same time, a majority also expresses some measure of concern for those employed in the oil and gas industry. There has been no significant change in view on this question over the past year.

A second, more detailed question presenting several options for fighting climate change shows no significant change in view over the past year. Presented with three options to address climate change:

- One in two (50%) Canadians support a *gradual* phase-out of the use of fossil fuels, so that people who work in industries like oil and gas are not suddenly put out of work.
- Just under one in five (17%) support an approach that would phase out the use of fossil fuels *as quickly as possible*, even if that means putting people who work in industries like oil and gas out of work.
- A similar proportion (19%) favours protecting the jobs of people who work in industries like oil and gas, and *not worrying so much* about phasing out the use of fossil fuels.
- 14 percent do not express an opinion.

As mentioned, preference for each of these options in early 2021 remains more or less unchanged from early 2020 (prior to the pandemic), both at the national level, and for individual provinces and regions.<sup>2</sup> Preference for a gradual phase-out of fossil fuels (so that people who work in industries like oil and gas are not suddenly put out of work) is up slightly in Saskatchewan and Ontario, and down slightly in B.C.; but, overall, the distribution of preferences in different parts of the country remains the same in 2021 as it was in 2020.

## Options to fight climate change: should we phase out the use of fossils fuels? 2020 - 2021



Q.28

*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?*

<sup>2</sup> The 2021 survey included two different versions of this question. Half of survey participants (approximately 2,900 respondents), chosen at random, were asked the version discussed here, which is also the same question asked of all participants in 2020. The other half (also approximately 2,900 respondents) were asked a different question, discussed below. As a result of this approach, the sample size in the smallest jurisdictions (such as the three territories, and PEI), are too small to support the reporting of their individual results. For this reason, results are reported for some regions (such as the Maritimes and the North), as well as for larger individual provinces.

These results mean that:

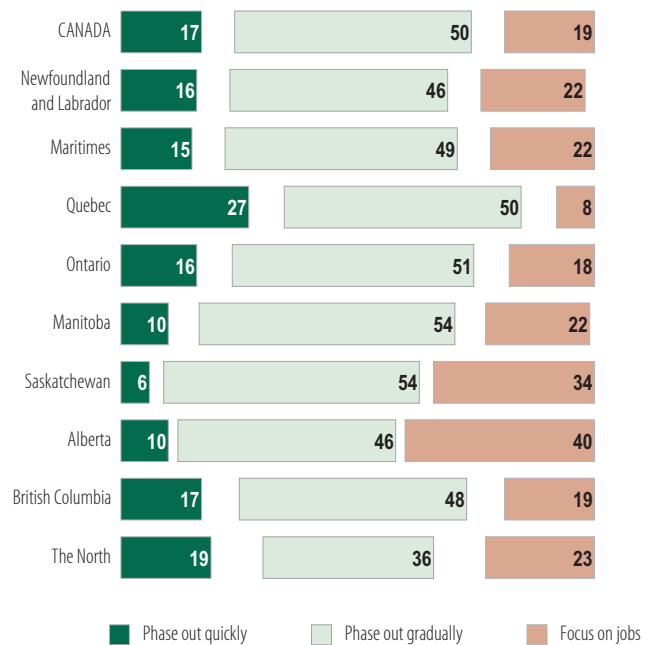
- In every part of the country, at least a plurality favours a gradual phase-out of fossil fuels (so that people who work in industries like oil and gas are not suddenly put out of work).
- In every part of the country, a majority favours an approach that involves the phasing out of fossil fuels, *either* gradually or quickly.
- In every part of the country, a majority expresses some measure of concern for those employed in the oil and gas industry.

While this broad pattern holds across the country, there are important differences among regions in terms of their *second* preference.

- Quebec is the only province where the *second most popular option*, after that of gradually phasing out the use of fossil fuels, is that of phasing out the use of fossil fuels as quickly as possible (even if that means putting people who work in industries like oil and gas out of work).<sup>3</sup>
- In every other part of the country, the option of not worrying so much about phasing out the use of fossil fuels (in order to protect the jobs of people who work in industries like oil and gas) is the second most popular option.
- In two of the biggest provinces – Ontario and B.C. – this option edges out that of phasing out the use of fossil fuels as quickly as possible by only a very small margin; in both Ontario and B.C., it is more accurate to say that the options of not worrying so much about phasing out the use of fossil fuels, and of phasing out the use of fossil fuels as quickly as possible, receive more or less equal support (and, in each case, are much less popular than the preferred option of gradually phasing out the use of fossil fuels).
- In contrast to Ontario and B.C., support for the option of not worrying so much about phasing out the use of fossil fuels is much higher in Alberta (40%) and Saskatchewan (34%); although this option nonetheless remains less popular in these provinces than that of gradually phasing out the use of fossil fuels.

## Options to fight climate change

By province/region



Q.28

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?

<sup>3</sup> Note that this is despite the fact that Quebecers are among the least likely to agree with the statement that “protecting the environment is more important than protecting jobs.” This suggests that Quebecers respond quite differently to a suggested trade-off between the environment and employment, depending on whether the latter is presented in general terms or more specifically in relation to employment in the petroleum sector.

In addition to these differences among regions, there is also a significant and familiar difference among the supporters of the main federal political parties.

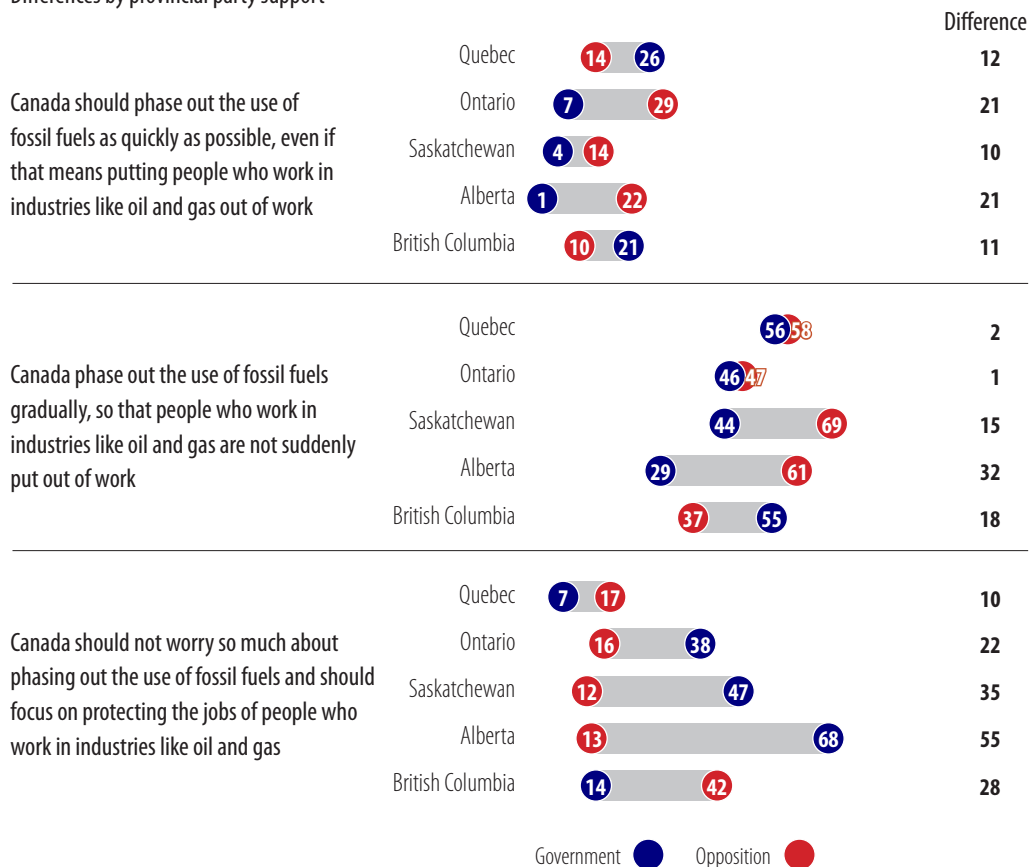
In the case of supporters of the Liberal Party, the NDP, the Green Party and the Bloc Québécois, at least one in two say that Canada should phase out the use of fossil fuels gradually, while the second most popular choice is phasing out the use of fossil fuels as quickly as possible. Only about one in ten (or fewer) of the supporters of these parties say that Canada should not worry so much about phasing out the use of fossil fuels.

The preferences of supporters of the Conservative Party are quite different. These supporters are split between the option of not worrying so much about phasing out the use of fossil fuels (42%) and gradually phasing out the use of these fuels (41%). Only six percent of Conservative Party supporters favour phasing out the use of fossil fuels as quickly as possible.

In the case of the first four federal parties, then, clear majorities favour the phasing out of fossil fuels to address climate change, with some difference of opinion as to whether that phase-out should occur gradually or quickly. By contrast, Conservative Party supporters are much more divided on the question of whether the priority should be the phasing out of fossil fuels at all.

### Options to fight climate change

Differences by provincial party support



Q.28

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

It is revealing to look at how these regional and political divisions combine, as the political divisions are much more pronounced in some regions than others. To illustrate this, the following analysis will be based on the combination of the two slightly different versions of the survey question, which are discussed below (see **Text Box**), and which produce similar results across the country (combining the two versions increases the survey sample within each province).<sup>4</sup> This analysis shows that:

- Partisan differences are least evident in Quebec: majorities of supporters of the federal Liberal Party, Conservative Party and the Bloc Québécois support either a faster or a gradual phasing out of fossil fuels, as do majorities of the supporters of the provincial Liberal Party, the Coalition Avenir Québec and the Parti Québécois.
- Partisan differences are much more evident in Ontario and B.C. In Ontario, large majorities of Liberal and NDP supporters favour either a faster or a gradual phasing out of fossil fuels; whereas supporters of the Conservative Party are more evenly split between these options and the option of not worrying so much about phasing out fossil fuels (this is true in the case of supporters of the parties at both the federal and provincial level). The pattern is somewhat similar in B.C., where supporters of the provincial NDP and Green Party lean toward phasing out fossil fuels (whether quickly or gradually); while supporters of the provincial Liberal Party are more evenly split between these options and the option of not worrying so much about phasing out fossil fuels.<sup>5</sup>
- Partisan differences are most acute in Saskatchewan and, especially, Alberta. In Alberta, a clear majority of supporters of the federal Conservative Party and the provincial UCP favour not worrying so much about

phasing out fossil fuels, whereas this option is favoured by very few federal Liberal Party or provincial NDP supporters.

These *regional* variations in *partisan* differences can be illustrated in two further ways. First, looking at right-leaning provincial parties, support for the option of “not worrying so much about phasing out fossil fuels” ranges widely, from seven percent among supporters of Quebec’s CAQ, to 38 percent of supporters of Ontario’s PCs, to 42 percent of supporters of B.C.’s Liberals, to 47 percent of Saskatchewan’s Saskatchewan Party, to 68 percent of Alberta’s UCP.<sup>6</sup>

Second, we can look at the difference in support for the option of “not worrying so much about phasing out fossil fuels” between supporters of the provincial right-leaning and left-leaning parties. In Ontario, there is a 22-point difference in support for this option between Conservative and NDP supporters (the Conservative-Liberal difference is 26 points). In B.C., the Liberal-NDP difference is 28 points (the Liberal-Green Party difference is a similar 27 points). In Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Party-NDP difference is 34 points. But in Alberta, the UCP-NDP difference reaches a dramatic 55 points.

These findings show that climate change is an issue that not only divides Canadians by region or by party affiliation. There are significant differences among supporters of the different right-leaning or conservative parties across the country. And there are significant differences in opinion across regions in the extent of the gap in view between supporters of parties on the left and on the right. It is certainly true that, on average, Albertans have different preferences on this issue than Quebecers. But Alberta itself is internally divided, if not polarized, between those on the left and the right of the political spectrum.

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<sup>4</sup> Separate analyses based on each version of the question produce similar results, suggesting that the decision to combine the versions does not affect the overall findings presented here.

<sup>5</sup> Atlantic Canada also appears to follow the same pattern, with large majorities of federal Liberal Party, NDP and Green Party supporters in the region favouring phasing out fossil fuels, while supporters of the Conservative Party are more evenly split. However, the sample sizes for the individual provinces are not large enough to explore this pattern at the provincial level, based on provincial party support.

<sup>6</sup> Data are available for all provinces, but an analysis of differences among provincial party supporters is more reliable for provinces with larger sample sizes.

## Exploring the trade-offs in addressing climate change

In 2020, the Confederation of Tomorrow survey asked Canadians about a trade-off between phasing out the use of fossil fuels like oil and gas (and replacing them with more renewable sources of energy), and protecting the jobs of people who work in the oil and gas industry. But this is not the only way that the trade-offs relating to a climate change policy can be presented. To explore this in more detail, the 2021 survey included two different versions of the question. Half of survey participants, chosen at random, were asked the same question as in 2020. The other half were asked a different question, which presented a trade-off between phasing out the use of fossil fuels and keeping the cost of energy as low as possible.

The second version of the question produces results that are very similar to the first. Almost one in two Canadians (47%) favour the option of phasing out the use of fossil fuels gradually, so that the cost of energy wouldn't increase too suddenly. Almost one in four (23%) favour not worrying so much about phasing out the use of fossil fuels and focusing on keeping the cost of energy as low as possible; and one in five (19%) believe that Canada should phase out the use of fossil fuels as quickly as possible, even if that means that the cost of energy would increase.

Table 2:  
Options to fight climate change: comparing results offering different trade-offs

| Response introduction   | Question version | Response conclusion  | Result (%) |
|---|------------------|--|------------|
| Canada should phase out the use of fossil fuels as quickly as possible, even if that means . . .    | Version A        | ... putting people who work in industries like oil and gas out of work               | 17         |
|   | Version B        | ... that the cost of energy would increase   | 19         |
| Canada should phase out the use of fossil fuels gradually, so that . . .                            | Version A        | ... people who work in industries like oil and gas are not suddenly put out of work. | 50         |
|   | Version B        | ... the cost of energy wouldn't increase too suddenly                                | 47         |
| Canada should not worry so much about phasing out the use of fossil fuels and should focus on . . . | Version A        | ... protecting the jobs of people who work in industries like oil and gas.           | 19         |
|   | Version B        | ... keeping the cost of energy as low as possible                                    | 23         |
| Cannot say  | Version A        | Cannot say   | 14         |
|   | Version B        | Cannot say   | 10         |

Q.28

*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?*

Opinions on how quickly Canada should phase out the use of fossil fuels are generally the same, therefore, regardless of whether the associated trade-off is framed in terms of jobs in the oil and gas sector, or in terms of the cost of energy. This is true for Canada as a whole, and within each region of the country. There are two partial exceptions: when associated with a possible increase in energy costs rather than possible job loss in the oil and gas sector, the option of a faster phase-out of fossil fuels is somewhat less popular in Newfoundland and Labrador, and somewhat more popular in Manitoba.

There is also very little difference in responses to the two versions of the question among different population groups, including between men and women, and between those with lower and higher household incomes. There is one partial exception: younger Canadians (between the ages of 18-24) are twice as likely to favour a faster phase-out of fossil fuels when that option is associated with higher energy costs (33%), compared to when it is associated with job losses in the oil and gas sector (17%).

# Priorities in fighting climate change

In each region, the item most likely to be seen as a top priority in developing a strategy to fight climate change is ensuring that all regions of Canada benefit from a strong economy. But there are significant regional differences as to the priority that should be accorded to meeting international greenhouse gas reduction targets, or to preventing job losses in the oil and gas industry.

The Confederation of Tomorrow 2021 survey asked Canadians to consider a list of 10 items and to say whether each should be a high priority, a medium priority, a low priority or not a priority at all for Canada in developing a strategy to fight climate change. The results show that Canadians' priorities in this regard have hardly changed at all over the past year.<sup>7</sup>

- As in 2020, among the 10 items asked about in the survey, the item most likely to be seen as a high priority in 2021 is **ensuring that all regions of Canada benefit from a strong economy** (62%). In every province, as well as in the North, this item is more likely than any other to be identified as a high priority.
- The second and third items most likely to be seen by Canadians as a high priority in the context of a climate change strategy are also economic in nature: **keeping taxes low** (46%) and **making sure our businesses stay competitive** with businesses in the United States (45%).
- Two other items are deemed a high priority, in the context of fighting climate change, by about two in five Canadians: **meeting the greenhouse gas reduction targets** that Canada agreed to in international agreements like the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (41%); and **making sure that the premiers of all the provinces and territories are in agreement** with Canada's climate change strategy (38%).

- About one in three Canadians see the following as a high priority in developing a strategy to address climate change: **setting a good example for other countries** around the world (35%); **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 (34%); and **preventing job losses in the oil and gas industry** (31%).
- Finally, two items are cited as a high priority by fewer than three in ten Canadians: **ending our reliance on fossil fuels** like oil and gas as quickly as possible (27%); and **minimizing government interference** in the free market economy (19%).

As was the case in 2020, the responses to this question in 2021 point to both areas of agreement and disagreement across the country.

On the one hand, there is agreement across the country on the importance (or unimportance) of several items. As mentioned, in each region, the item most likely to be seen as a top priority is keeping all regional economies strong. Keeping taxes low is among the top three priorities in each region. At the other end of the scale, minimizing government interference in the free market economy is either the lowest or second lowest priority in each region.

On the other hand, there are significant differences as to the priority that should be accorded to meeting international greenhouse gas reduction targets, or to preventing job losses in the oil and gas industry. Meeting international greenhouse gas reduction targets is among the top four priorities in each region, with the notable exceptions of Newfoundland and Labrador, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Conversely, preventing job losses in the oil and gas industry is near the bottom of the list in Quebec, Manitoba and B.C., but a much higher priority in Newfoundland and Labrador, Alberta and the North.

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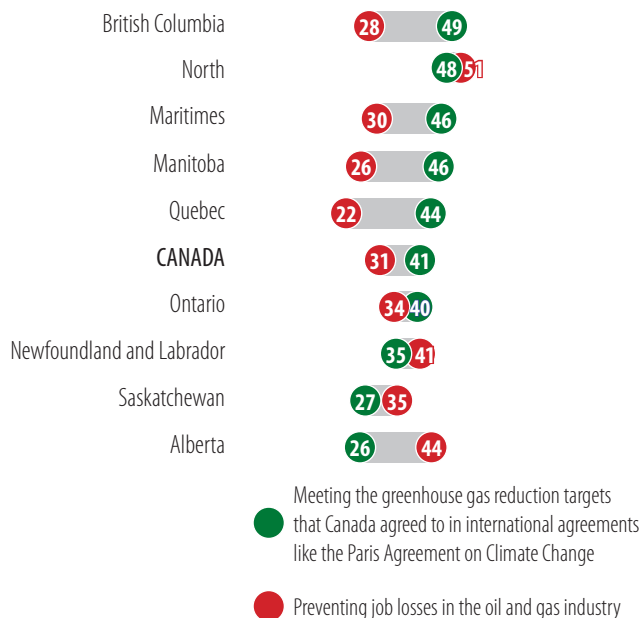
<sup>7</sup> In 2021, each survey participant was asked about five of the 10 items, chosen at random.

As argued in 2020, these results expose the conundrum that lies at the heart of the issues of climate change and energy resource management in Canada. In principle, Canadians in all parts of the country wish to see the economy of each region thrive as the country combats climate change. In practice, many of those in areas more dependent on the oil and gas industry believe that this includes protecting jobs in this sector, while many Canadians in other parts of the country are less sure.

This difference in view, however, is not one that pits the West against the rest of the country. Those most likely to agree that protecting jobs in the oil and gas sector should be a high priority in developing a strategy to fight climate change are residents of the North (51%), Alberta (44%), and Newfoundland and Labrador (41%). Those least likely to agree are residents of Quebec (22%), Manitoba (26%) and B.C. (28%). Some of the biggest differences of opinion on this item, therefore, are within the West itself (for example, between Alberta, on the one hand, and Manitoba and B.C. on the other).

## Contrasting priorities in developing a strategy to fight climate change

High priority (%)



Q.33

*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?*

**Table 3:**  
**Priorities in developing a strategy to fight climate change**  
2020 - 2021 (%)

| Item  | High Priority 2020 | High Priority 2021 |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| Ensuring that all regions of Canada benefit from a strong economy   | 60                 | 62                 |
| Keeping taxes low   | 50                 | 46                 |
| Making sure our businesses stay competitive with businesses in the USA  | 46                 | 45                 |
| Meeting the greenhouse gas reduction targets that Canada agreed to in international agreements like the Paris Agreement on Climate Change           | 40                 | 41                 |
| Making sure that the premiers of all the provinces and territories are in agreement with Canada's climate change strategy                           | 43                 | 38                 |
| Setting a good example for other countries around the world   | 40                 | 35                 |
| 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                 |
| Preventing job losses in the oil and gas industry   | 33                 | 31                 |
| Ending our reliance on fossil fuels like oil and gas as quickly as possible   | 28                 | 27                 |
| Minimizing government interference in the free market economy   | 22                 | 19                 |

Q33.

*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?*

# Trust in federal and provincial governments

The proportion trusting the federal government more to make the right decisions in addressing climate change has increased since 2019 in each the provinces at the forefront of the challenge to the federal carbon pricing policy.

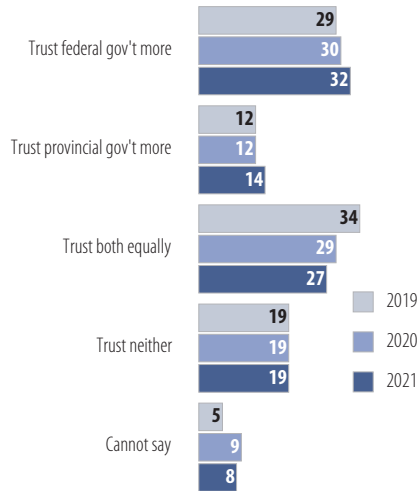
## Addressing climate change

Since the inception of the current federal government's policy to address climate change by placing a price on carbon emissions, it has faced strong opposition from provincial governments in the Prairies and in Ontario. The Confederation of Tomorrow 2021 Survey, which was completed shortly before the Supreme Court of Canada upheld the constitutionality of the federal policy, shows that Canadians remain much more likely to trust the federal government more, rather than their provincial or territorial government more, to make the right decisions in this area.

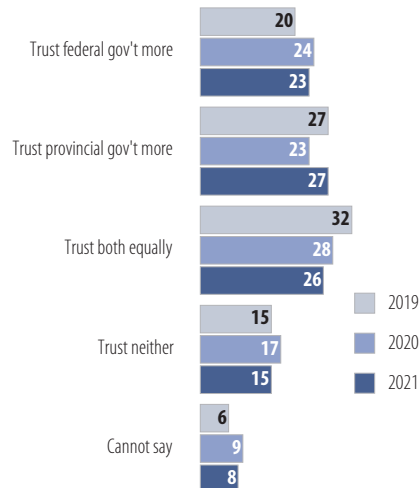
Currently, one in three (32%) Canadians trust the federal government more to make the right decisions in addressing climate change; while just over one in four (27%) trust the federal government and their provincial or territorial government equally. One in five (19%) trust neither government, and 14 percent trust their provincial or territorial government more (an additional 8% cannot say). Since 2019, trust in both the federal government and in provincial or territorial governments has edged up slightly, while the proportion trusting both governments equally has fallen.

## Which level of government is trusted to address key issues? Canada 2019 - 2021

### ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE



### MANAGE ENERGY RESOURCES

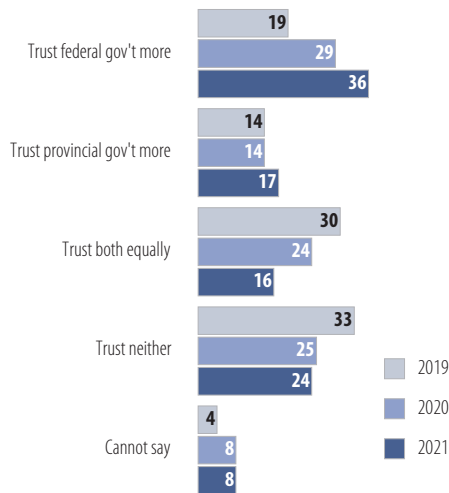


Q.25

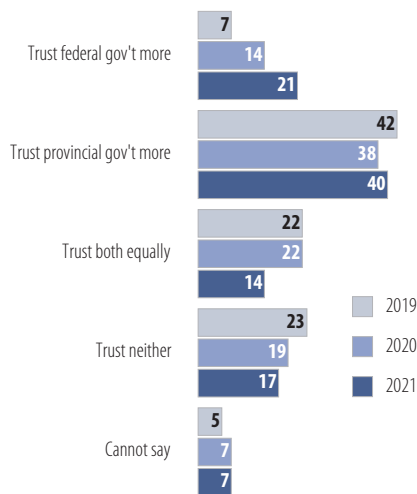
Which level of government do you trust more to make the right decisions in the following areas?

**Which level of government is trusted to address key issues?**  
Alberta 2019 - 2021

**ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE**



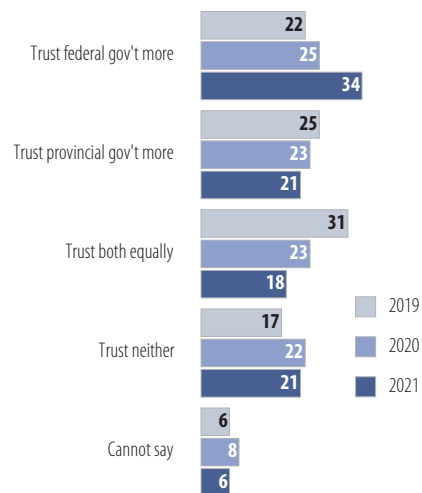
**MANAGE ENERGY RESOURCES**



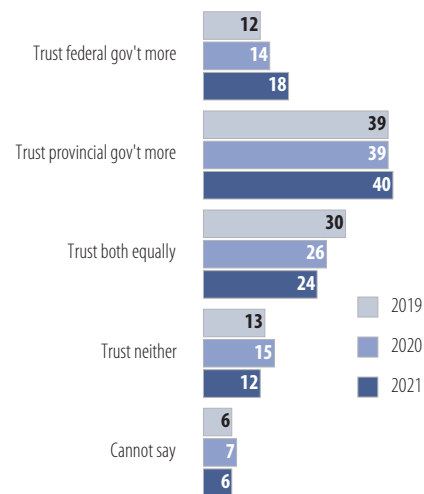
Q.25  
Which level of government do you trust more to make the right decisions in the following areas?

**Which level of government is trusted to address key issues?**  
Saskatchewan 2019 - 2021

**ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE**



**MANAGE ENERGY RESOURCES**



Q.25  
Which level of government do you trust more to make the right decisions in the following areas?

Behind these modest changes at the national level, there are some more significant changes at the provincial level. Most notably, the proportion trusting the federal government more to make the right decisions in addressing climate change has increased since 2019 in each the provinces at the forefront of the challenge to the federal carbon pricing policy:

- In Ontario, the proportion trusting the federal government more increased by five points (from 35% to 40%).
- In Saskatchewan, the proportion trusting the federal government more increased by 12 points (from 22% to 34%).
- In Alberta, the proportion trusting the federal government more increased by 17 points (from 19% to 36%).

In these three provinces, the proportions trusting their provincial government more on this issue did not change as markedly during this period; rather, the increase in the proportion trusting the federal government more was offset by a drop in the proportions either trusting both governments equally, or trusting neither government. In these provinces, then, the provincial governments' opposition to the federal policy during this period prompted a portion of their citizens, who previously had not favoured one government over the other, to side with Ottawa.

In addition to these changes, the proportion trusting the federal government more in addressing climate change has risen since 2019 in each of the Maritime provinces (by 7 points across the region), as well as in Manitoba (by 7 points). There was no significant change in Newfoundland and Labrador or in Quebec. This leaves B.C. (whose provincial price on carbon pre-dates the federal policy) as the one province in which the proportion trusting the federal government more in this area declined (by 7 points, from 24% in 2019 to 17% in 2021; the proportion in that province trusting the provincial government increased by an equivalent amount).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> There is no comparable data for the territories, as a different question was asked in that region in 2019. Since 2020, however, the proportion in each of the territories trusting the federal government more in addressing climate change has fallen sharply, from 28 percent to 14 percent.

# Trust federal government more to make the right decisions in addressing climate change

2019 - 2021, by province/territory



Q.25a

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

## Managing energy resources

Among the concerns expressed about the federal government's policies to address climate change (including carbon pricing policy, and policies relating to the transportation of oil and gas through pipelines and by tanker) is that they will harm employment in, and revenue derived from, the country's oil and gas industry.

In terms of managing energy resources, the 2021 Confederation of Tomorrow survey finds that the public's trust is fairly evenly distributed, with roughly one in four trusting their provincial or territorial government more (27%), trusting both governments equally (26%), or trusting the federal government more (23%) (fewer (15%) trust neither government, and 8% cannot say). There has been little change in opinions overall since 2019 (although the proportion trusting both governments equally has declined slightly).

Once again, however, there have been some more noticeable changes within individual provinces, notably Alberta and Saskatchewan. In Alberta, the proportion trusting the federal government more in managing energy resources has tripled since 2019, from seven percent to 21 percent. The change is much more modest in Saskatchewan: an increase of six

points, from 12 percent to 18 percent. To be clear, Albertans and Saskatchewanians remain much more likely to trust their provincial government more in this area than they are to trust their federal government more; moreover, the proportion trusting their provincial government more in managing energy resources continues to be higher in these two provinces than in any other. But in both provinces, the gap between the proportion trusting their provincial government more and that trusting the federal government more has narrowed over the past two years.

In a handful of other provinces, including Newfoundland and Labrador, the Maritimes and Manitoba, the most noticeable change since 2019 has been a drop in the proportion trusting both the federal government and their provincial government equally to manage energy resources, or (to a lesser extent) trusting neither government, and increases in the proportions trusting either the federal government more or their provincial government more. There has been little change either way in the country's three biggest provinces: Ontario, Quebec and B.C. Views have also not changed in the North, where a plurality trust their territorial government more to manage energy resources.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> For this question, data for the territories are only available for 2020 and 2021.

# Confidence in leaders

Canadians are more likely to have confidence in the leaders of environmental groups than in business leaders or political leaders. In the mid-2000s, Albertans were the most likely to express confidence in both political leaders and business leaders, and Quebecers were the least likely. In 2021, the positions have reversed: today, Quebecers are the most likely to have confidence in these leaders, and Albertans the least likely.

Governments are not the only actors in the policy debates around climate change. Environmental organizations, business interests, scientists and journalists all seek to build public support for their positions. In the context of the debate about climate change, it's worth considering how citizens view these different types of actors, and how these views have evolved over time.

## Confidence in organizations and leaders

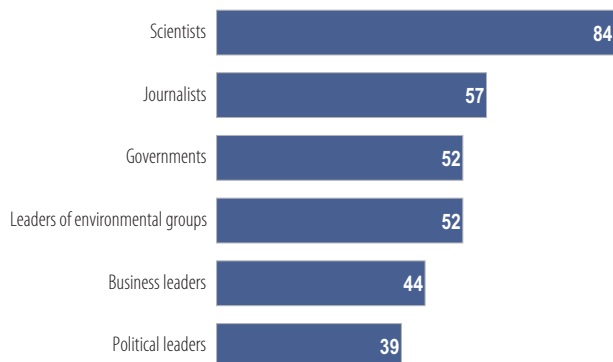
Canadians currently express a high degree of confidence in scientists: 84 percent have a lot (43%) or some (41%) confidence in scientists.<sup>10</sup> No other type of leader or group mentioned in the survey attracts a comparable level of public confidence.

A little more than one in two Canadians (57%) have a lot or some confidence in journalists; and roughly one in two have the same level of confidence in governments (52%) and the leaders of environmental groups (52%). Fewer have a lot or some confidence in business leaders (44%) and political leaders (39%).

Looking at the degree of confidence in the three types of leaders – political leaders, business leaders and the leaders of environmental groups – the pattern is broadly similar across the country: citizens in each province are more likely to express a lot or some confidence in the leaders of environmental groups than in either business or political leaders. Alberta is a slight exception: in that province, citizens are more likely to express a lot or some confidence

## Confidence in leaders and institutions

A lot or some confidence



Q.CONF1

In general, in Canada today, would you say you aor no confidence at all in each of the following?

in business leaders (38%), though they are almost as likely to express the same degree of confidence in leaders of environmental groups (36%) (but, as elsewhere, less likely to express confidence in political leaders (24%)).

As is generally the case with leaders of environmental groups, in each part of the country, citizens are more likely to express confidence in journalists than in business or political leaders. In Atlantic Canada and the North, citizens are somewhat more likely to have confidence in leaders of environmental groups than in journalists; the reverse is true in Central Canada and the West.

<sup>10</sup> See: Environics Institute for Survey Research, *All in this Together? Canadians' Views on Masks, Vaccines and Lockdowns during the COVID-19 Pandemic* (April 2021); <https://www.environicsinstitute.org/projects/project-details/all-in-this-together-canadians-views-on-masks-vaccines-and-lockdowns-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>

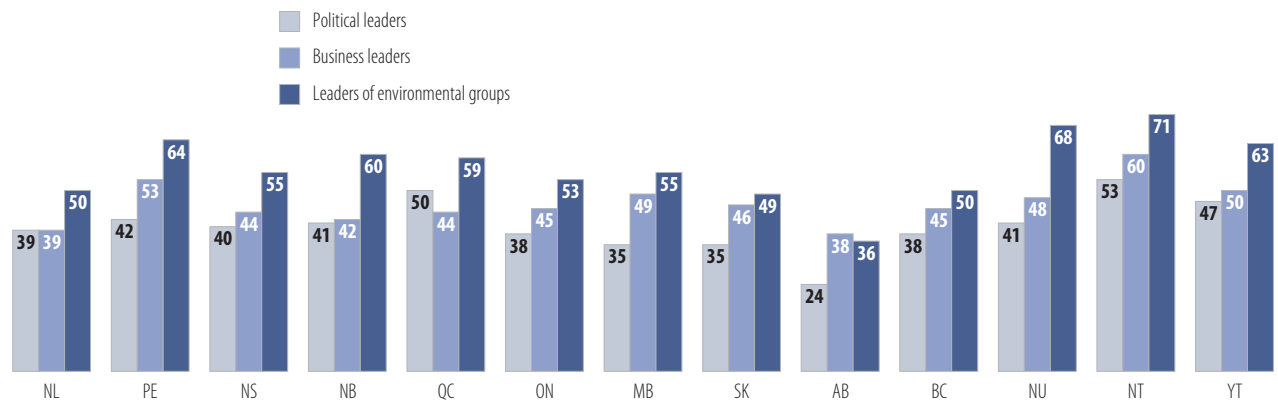
## Regional differences in confidence

Generally speaking, the differences across Canada in the levels of confidence in different types of leaders are relatively modest. Residents of the Northwest Territories and Quebec are somewhat more likely than average to express confidence in political leaders; confidence in leaders of environmental groups is highest in the North, in Quebec and in Atlantic Canada.

There is one exception to this pattern: in most cases, levels of confidence in leaders are sharply lower in Alberta. Compared to the rest of the country, Albertans are six points less likely to have confidence in business leaders; 17 points less likely to have confidence in political leaders; and 18 points less likely to have confidence in the leaders of environmental groups.<sup>11</sup> Confidence in each of these three types of leaders is lower in Alberta than in any other province or territory.

### Confidence in leaders

A lot or some confidence, by province or territory



Q.CONF1

In general, in Canada today, would you say you have a lot of confidence, some confidence, little confidence or no confidence at all in each of the following?

<sup>11</sup> The comparison is not to the Canadian average, but for all jurisdictions minus Alberta.

## Trends over time

It is often assumed that the public's confidence in political leaders and public institutions is steadily declining. This is not necessarily the case. Over the past 40 years, levels of confidence have fluctuated, rather than consistently falling to new lows. And the trend is different for different types of leaders or organizations.<sup>12</sup>

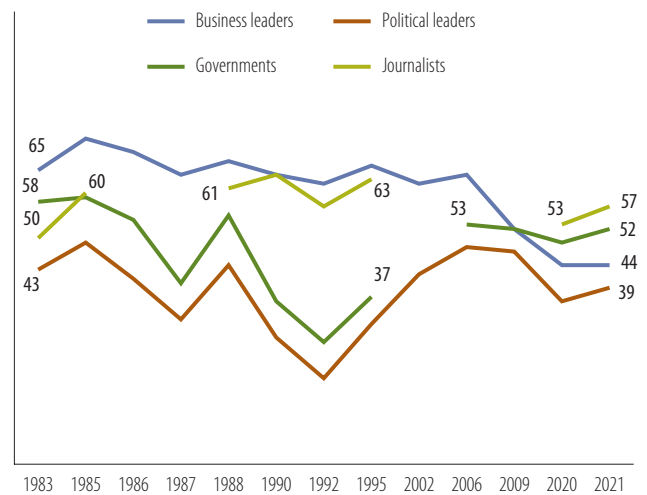
**Political leaders and governments.** Public confidence in both political leaders and governments in Canada hit a low point in 1992, amid an economic recession and a national unity crisis. In the roughly 15 years that followed, confidence steadily grew; it then held steady over the past 15 years. In the case of political leaders, confidence has declined again in the most recent period, but remains higher than in the 1990s, and comparable to levels seen in the 1980s. Despite this recent decline, Canadians remain twice as likely to express confidence in political leaders today as they were in 1992. (The COVID-19 pandemic appears to have had only a slight impact on these trends, with confidence in both governments and political leaders up three points each since early 2020.)

**Business leaders.** For much of the past 40 years – roughly from the early 1980s to the mid-2000s – confidence in business leaders held steady at a relatively high level: around two in three Canadians said they had a lot or some confidence in business leaders. Confidence then fell significantly at the time of the last financial crisis, and has now fallen even further, to 44 percent today. There has thus been a 20-point drop in confidence in business leaders since 2006.

**Journalists.** Confidence in journalists today is roughly at the mid-point of its historical range; it was slightly lower than today in the early 1980s, and similar or slightly higher in the 1990s.

## Confidence in leaders and institutions

1983 - 2021, A lot or some confidence



Q.CONF1

*In general, in Canada today, would you say you aor no confidence at all in each of the following?*

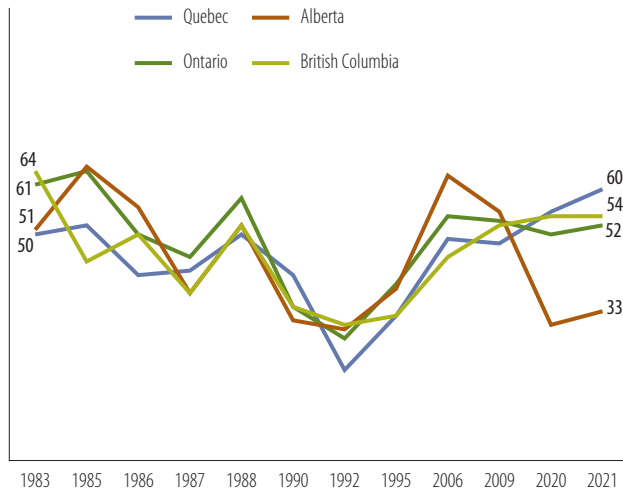
**Leaders of environmental groups.** Confidence in leaders of environmental groups has not been tracked as frequently; it was only measured once before, in 2002. At that time, almost seven in ten (68%) Canadians had a lot (12%) or some (57%) confidence in leaders of environmental groups. This is much higher than the level recorded in 2021: currently, 52 percent of Canadians say they have a lot (9%) or some (43%) confidence in leaders of environmental groups.<sup>13</sup> As will be discussed in the following section, this drop in confidence has not been uniform across different segments of the population.

<sup>12</sup> Data prior to 2021 reported in this section come from the Environics Focus Canada Surveys, surveys from the Centre for Research and Information on Canada (CRIC), and the *A Better Canada* survey conducted by the Environics Institute and Vancity in 2020.

<sup>13</sup> In 2002, the response options were: a great deal, some, not very much or no confidence; in 2021 the options were: a lot, some, little or no confidence. The authors do not believe this variation in wording is responsible for the changes over time. To improve the clarity of the text, the 2021 wording is used to describe the results in both years.

### Confidence in governments

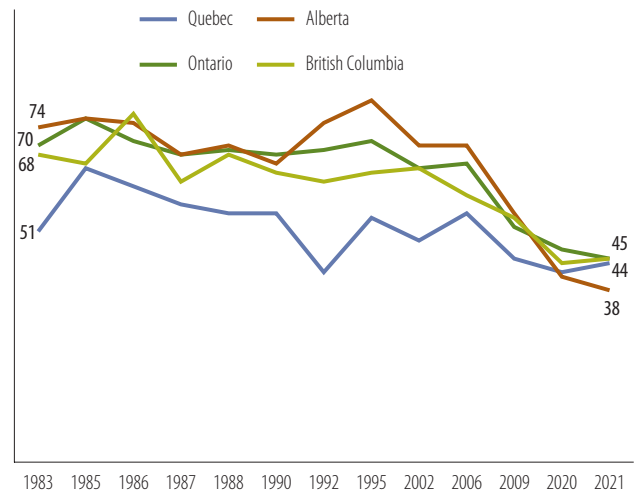
1983 - 2021, A lot or some confidence



Q.CONF1  
In general, in Canada today, would you say you aor no confidence at all in each of the following?

### Confidence in business leaders

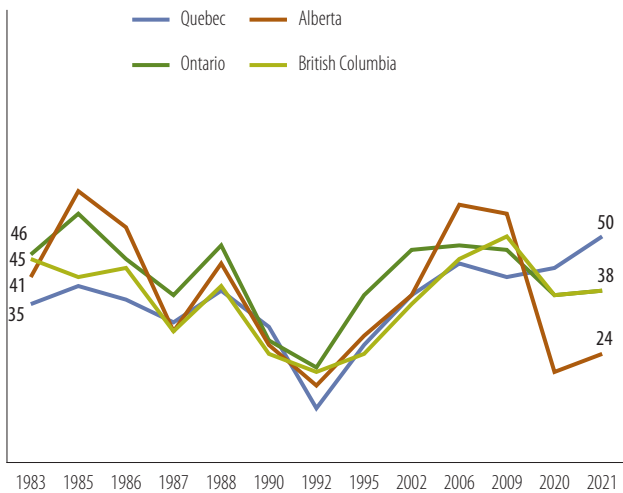
1983 - 2021, A lot or some confidence



Q.CONF1  
In general, in Canada today, would you say you aor no confidence at all in each of the following?

### Confidence in political leaders

1983 - 2021, A lot or some confidence



Q.CONF1  
In general, in Canada today, would you say you aor no confidence at all in each of the following?

## Regional trends over time

In general terms, over the past four decades, the trends in confidence in the different types of leader follow the same pattern across the country's four largest provinces: in Ontario, Quebec, B.C. and Alberta, confidence in governments and political leaders drops in the early 1990s and then recovers; confidence in business leaders declines after the 2008 financial crisis; confidence in journalists more or less holds steady; and confidence in environmental leaders is lower today than in 2002.<sup>14</sup> Within this general framework, however, there are several revealing details and partial exceptions. To illustrate, this section will focus on the three types of leaders: political leaders, business leaders and the leaders of environmental groups.

- In terms of confidence in political leaders, Quebec deviates somewhat from the overall trend, as confidence has continued to increase, even in the most recent period. In fact, confidence in political leaders in Quebec is higher today than at any point since this question was first asked in 1983 (while the most recent jump in confidence may be linked to the Quebecers' approval of their provincial government's management of the COVID-19 pandemic, the overall trend pre-dates the pandemic's arrival). Alberta stands out in the opposite sense: the drop in

confidence in political leaders in the most recent period is greatest in that province. Whereas confidence in political leaders is six points higher in Quebec than it was 15 years ago, in Alberta it is 33 points lower.

- In terms of confidence in business leaders, the trend is more consistent: confidence is lower today than prior to the financial crisis in each of the four big provinces. But again, Quebec and Alberta offer the most striking contrast. Since 2006, confidence in business leaders has fallen by 32 points in Alberta, triple the 11-point drop in Quebec. In the case of both political leaders and business leaders, Alberta and Quebec have essentially reversed positions over the past 15 years; in the mid-2000s, Albertans were the most likely to express confidence in these leaders, and Quebecers the least likely to do so. In 2021, Quebecers are the most likely to express such confidence, and Albertans the least likely.<sup>15</sup>
- In terms of confidence in leaders of environmental groups, the trend is also consistent: confidence is down across the four big provinces, but most acutely in Alberta. Since 2002, there has been a 14-point drop in confidence in both Quebec and B.C., a 17-point drop in Ontario, and a 22-point drop in Alberta.

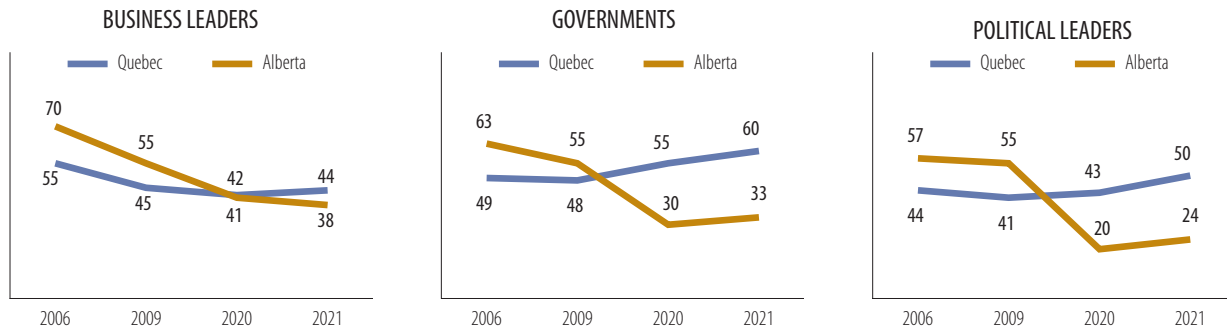
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<sup>14</sup>The analysis in this section is restricted to the four largest provinces, as the sample sizes for the other individual provinces in the earlier surveys are too small. At the regional level, however, Atlantic Canada follows this same trend. Data for Manitoba and Saskatchewan are available for some previous years, but not all; for the years for which data are available, the general pattern also appears to follow the one described here.

<sup>15</sup>This trend has been documented elsewhere using data from a different series of surveys: see Environics Institute for Survey Research, *Public Support for Canada's Political System: Regional Trends* (January 2020); <https://www.environicsinstitute.org/projects/project-details/public-support-for-canada-s-political-system-regional-trends>.

## Confidence in leaders: Alberta and Quebec

2006 - 2021, A lot or some confidence

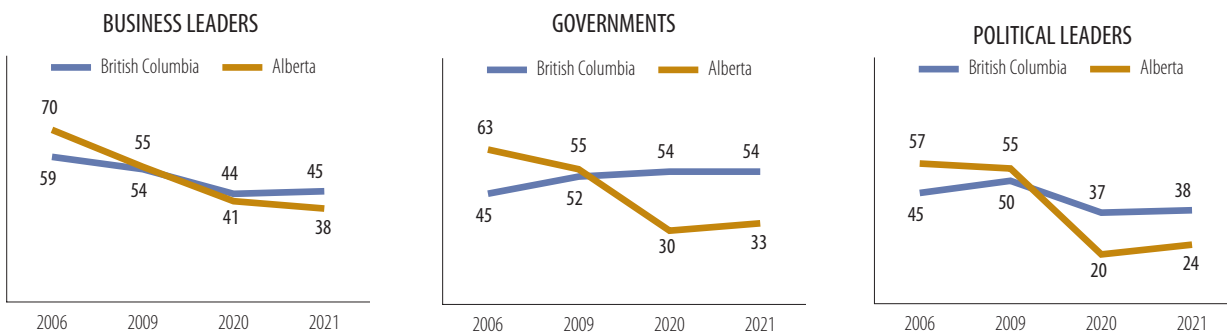


Q.CONF1

In general, in Canada today, would you say you aor no confidence at all in each of the following?

## Confidence in leaders: Alberta and British Columbia

2006 - 2021, A lot or some confidence



Q.CONF1

In general, in Canada today, would you say you aor no confidence at all in each of the following?

# Confidence in leaders of environmental groups: widening divides

The divide in views of environmental leaders between supporters of the federal governing and opposition parties is much wider today than it was two decades ago. While there has been very little change in confidence in leaders of environmental groups among supporters of the federal Liberal Party, confidence in these leaders among Conservative Party supporters today is lower than it was in 2002 among both PC Party supporters and supporters of the Canadian Alliance.

As mentioned previously, while confidence in leaders of environmental groups declined by 16 points between 2002 and 2021, the extent of this decline has not been uniform across different segments of the population. This can be illustrated in two ways.

First, the decline in confidence in leaders of environmental groups is much more pronounced among those who do not have confidence in other types of leaders.

- Confidence in leaders of environmental groups among those who have confidence in business leaders has fallen by seven points, from 70 percent in 2002 to 63 percent in 2021. However, among those who do not have confidence in business leaders, confidence in leaders of environmental groups fell by 17 points over the same period, from 64 percent to 47 percent.
- Similarly, confidence in leaders of environmental groups among those who have confidence in political leaders has fallen by only three points, from 78 percent in 2002 to 75 percent in 2021. However, among those who do not have confidence in political leaders, confidence in leaders of environmental groups fell by 22 points over the same period, from 61 percent to 39 percent.

There are two implications of this trend. First, views of environmental leaders are today more likely to be related to views on other leaders than they were two decades ago. Secondly, in terms of views of environmental leaders, there is a bigger divide today than in 2002 between those who do and do not have confidence in other leaders. In other words, views are somewhat more polarized.

The second way to illustrate this trend is to examine the change in views on environmental leaders among the supporters of the different federal political parties.<sup>16</sup> Since 2002, there has been very little change in the degree of confidence in leaders of environmental groups expressed by supporters of the federal Liberal Party. There has been much more change, however, among supporters of conservative parties – which in 2002 included both the Progressive Conservative Party and the Canadian Alliance. Confidence in leaders of environmental groups among Conservative Party supporters today (29%) is 35 points lower than was in 2002 among PC Party supporters (64%) and 14 points lower than it was in 2002 among supporters of the Alliance (43%).<sup>17</sup> Confidence in leaders of environmental groups has also declined by 23 points among NDP supporters. As a result, the divide in views of environmental leaders between supporters of the federal governing and opposition parties is much wider today than it was two decades ago.

Taken together, these results suggest that, as climate change has moved to the forefront of the public agenda, the issue of the environment has become more partisan – and thus more divisive or polarized. It is not sufficient to point out that there has been a decline in confidence in leaders of environmental groups. It is important to add that there has also been a widening divide on this issue between supporters of the federal Liberal Party and its opponents, and between those with and without confidence in other types of leaders.

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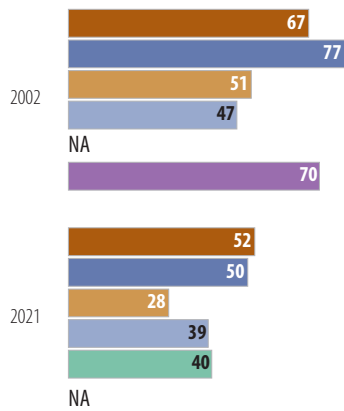
<sup>16</sup> The 2002 and 2021 surveys use slightly different ways to identify party supporters. In 2002, Canadians were asked: “In federal politics, do you usually think of yourself as a supporter of the [list of parties].” In 2021, they were asked: “If a Canadian federal election were held today, which one of the following parties would you vote for?”

<sup>17</sup> The average in 2002 for supporters of the PCs and Alliance was 55 percent – 26 percentage points higher than the figure for the Conservative Party today.

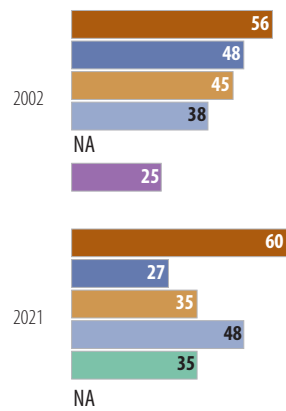
## Confidence in leaders: Federal party support

2006 - 2021, A lot or some confidence

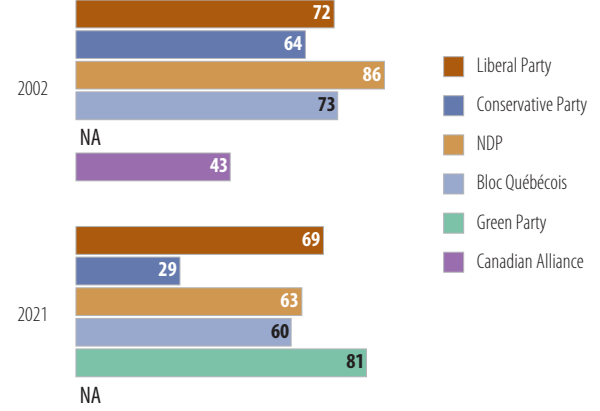
### BUSINESS LEADERS



### POLITICAL LEADERS



### LEADERS OF ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS



Q.CONF1

In general, in Canada today, would you say you aor no confidence at all in each of the following?

## Differences between and within provinces

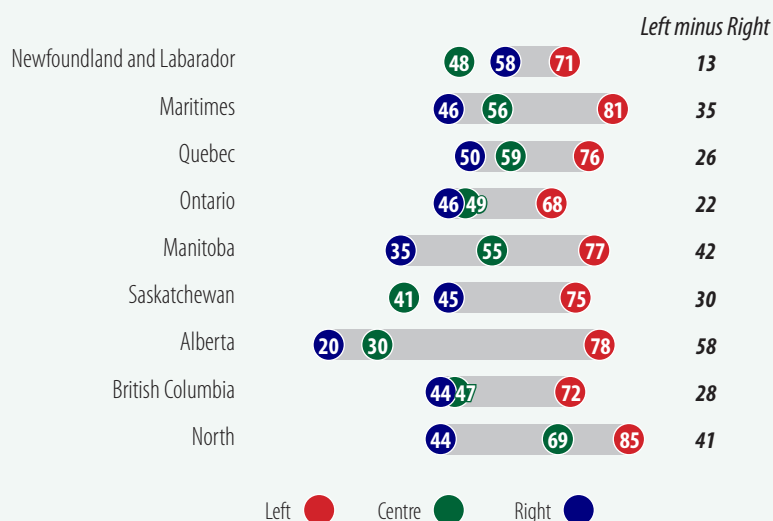
Confidence in leaders of environmental groups is lower in Alberta than elsewhere in the country: 36 percent of Albertans have a lot or some confidence in these leaders, compared to 54 percent in the rest of the country. As discussed earlier in this report, however, these differences *between* provinces or regions on issues related to the environment should not overshadow the fact that there are significant differences of opinion *within* regions and provinces as well. And on these types of questions, these differences are greater within Alberta than elsewhere in Canada.

For instance, there is a 58-point difference between the level of confidence in environmental leaders expressed by Albertans who place themselves on the left of the political spectrum (78%), and those who place themselves on the right (20%). This is roughly twice the size of the left-right gap in confidence in neighbouring B.C. (28 points) and Saskatchewan (30 points); and also much bigger than the gap in the central Canadian provinces of Ontario (22 points) and Quebec (26 points).

The difference in the views of men and women in Alberta are also larger than in the rest of the country, especially in the case of Albertans in the younger generations (Millennials and Gen Z). Among Albertans age 40 or younger, there is a 21-point difference between the confidence in leaders of environmental groups expressed by women (53%) and that expressed by men (32%). In the rest of Canada, no such difference exists, as men (59%) and women (60%) age 40 and younger are equally likely to express confidence in leaders of environmental groups.

As argued by political scientists Loleen Berdahl and Éric Monpetit, the way that we talk about public attitudes in Canada partly explains why the country often appears more regionally divided than it is. “Commentators often slip into language that conflates “majority opinion” with “provincial opinion.” When majority public support (or opposition) is implied to reflect the entirety of provincial opinion, it is easy to lose sight of the range of attitudes present within a province.”<sup>18</sup>

### Confidence in leaders of environmental groups, by political ideology\*



\* Survey participants were asked: In politics, people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place yourself on the scale below? (0 = left; 10 = right); in the table, “left” = 0 to 3 on the scale; “centre” = 4 to 6; and “right” = 7 to 10.

Q.CONF1

In general, in Canada today, would you say you have a lot of confidence, some confidence, little confidence or no confidence at all in each of the following?

<sup>18</sup> Loleen Berdahl and Éric Monpetit, “Canada: Is it Really a Country Divided?” *The Conversation* (2019); <https://theconversation.com/canada-is-it-really-a-country-divided-118514>.





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