

Powerful words: Talking to Canadians about climate action

CLIMATE OF CHANGE SURVEY 2018
COMMUNICATIONS BRIEFING

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Methodology

The 2018 Climate of Change survey used a dual frame (i.e. landline and cellphone) random digit dialing (RDD) procedure to administer a 15 minute survey to a geographically disproportionate stratified sample of 1,200 Canadians, 18 years of age and older. Interviews were conducted in English and French from October 5th 2018 to October 24th 2018, split between landline (720) and cellphone (480) listings. To ensure that the data collected are representative of the Canadian population, a weighting factor based on region, age and gender was employed. The AAPOR RR3 response rate for this study was 8%, which is typical for a study of this kind. Based on a sample of this size, the results can be considered accurate to within $\pm 2.83\%$, 19 times out of 20.

Introduction

The climate is changing. Not so long ago, the Trudeau government seemed poised to deliver significant climate action after years of foot-dragging by the federal government. Following historic negotiations at the COP 21, the House of Commons unanimously passed a motion supporting Canada's renewed commitment to reduce its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions 30% below 2005 levels by 2030 as part of its contribution to the Paris Agreement on climate change. On the domestic front, the federal government developed an ambitious Pan Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change that enjoyed support from all Canadian provinces, save Saskatchewan. But a series of events—including the formation of new provincial governments led by conservative politicians that openly contest the federal approach to carbon pricing—suggest populism and polarization might set the stage for a showdown on climate change and carbon pricing in the next federal election.

Fortunately, for advocates of action on climate change, the present context also presents an opportunity. Unprecedented wildfires, increased severe flooding, a dire warning from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and calls from the Canadian and international medical community have kept climate change in the public eye, so that the issue now ranks among the most salient, with a growing number of Canadians paying attention. Indeed, the latest round of EcoAnalytics polling finds a significant increase in the proportion of Canadians who cite climate change and environmental issues as the most important problem facing the country. The EcoAnalytics and [Université de Montréal](#) polling has also consistently shown that Canadians need no convincing that climate change is real. This bodes well for parties seen to be best suited to respond to the climate change issue, so long as the economy does not fall into a recession and the issue remains in the public eye as something that political parties ought to be evaluated on in the coming 2019 general federal election. Over the coming months, advocates of climate action thus have an important role to play in setting the agenda. By keeping climate change high in the minds of voters, advocates can positively alter the context in which voters evaluate political candidates (a process known as political priming).

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Keeping climate change high in mind

The latest round of EcoAnalytics polling conducted in October 2018 found that fully a quarter of those interviewed cite either environmental issues (14%) or climate change (10%) when asked “In your opinion, what is the most important problem facing Canada today?” in an unprompted, open-ended format. This result provides a good example of what the MIP is measuring—namely, perceived public priorities—or what people see and hear in the news. Indeed, the most recent polling data reflect the prominence of climate change in the Canadian media following the IPCC special report, “Global Warming of 1.5°C”, released in early October, two days after the Climate of Change Survey went into the field. This context is different from that of October 2017, when the Climate Survey was fielded at a time of concern around the economy, NAFTA, and an increasingly unpredictable U.S. presidency. At that time, jobs (8%) and the economy (12%) significantly outpolled the environment (5%) and climate change (4%). Now, with more certainty around the revised NAFTA (CUSMA) trade deal, historically low unemployment rates, and with Canadians more used to the unpredictability of Donald Trump, the environment and climate are now outpolling jobs and the economy by roughly the same 2:1 ratio in 2018. While this shift is context-specific, it speaks directly to the agenda-setting role that ENGOs, scientists and the media can play in making and keeping climate change salient.

While encouraging, it is important to note that issue salience is not the same as personal issue importance or policy preference. Indeed, despite the increase in “climate change” and “the environment” as first mentions, the 2018 Climate of Change survey found little change in the proportion of Canadians who qualify climate change as a “very serious” problem between 2011 (57%) and 2018 (61%). Support for carbon pricing, though marginally higher in 2018, continues to be polarized, with roughly a quarter of Canadians either strongly supportive or strongly opposed. The rise in perceived issue salience has not increased the sense of personal risk, with little change in the proportion of Canadians who feel climate change places them at “a great deal” of harm between 2017 (17%) and 2018 (18%), and a similarly modest difference in the percentage of Canadians who report discussing climate change “very often” with their family and friends (21% in 2017 vs. 26% in 2018). Despite the increasing salience of climate change as a public issue, this has not necessarily led to a collective sense of urgency to act.

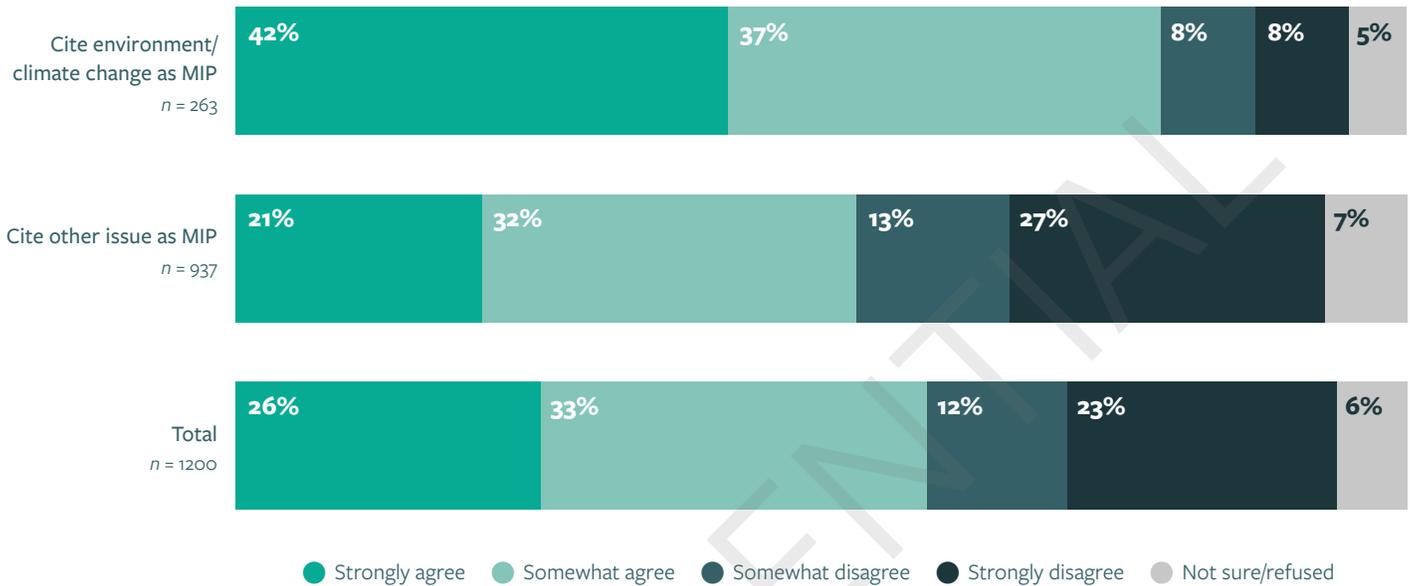
With these caveats in mind, our analysis of the EcoAnalytics data nevertheless highlights why efforts to place climate change in the media (and thus increase perceptions of climate change as a top public issue) is important for advocates of

Perceived issue salience is strongly associated with policy preferences

climate action. We found that those who cite the environment and climate change as the most important problem (MIP, 81%) are substantially more likely than those who do not (54%) to say climate change is a very serious problem. Those who perceive the environment and climate change to be of high salience are also twice as likely than those who cite other issues to discuss climate change with their family and friends “very often:” 40% and 20%, respectively. We also found the proportion of respondents saying climate change will harm them “a great deal” to be somewhat larger among those citing the environment and climate change as the most important problem (25%) relative to those who cite other issues (15%). Among those who cite environmental issues and climate change when asked to respond to the MIP, no less than 68% feel climate change will harm them either “a moderate amount” (43%) or “a great deal” (25%).

Perceived issue salience is also strongly associated with policy preferences. We found that the odds of perceiving governments as “not doing enough to address climate change” are nearly three times greater for people who cite the environment or climate change as the MIP relative to people who cite other issues. This propensity for those perceiving climate change to be a high public priority and support for more government action can further be seen in Figure 1, which examines support for a carbon tax across different sets of responses to the MIP survey question.

Figure 1: Difference in support for taxing fossil fuels across respondents who cite, or do not cite, the environment or climate change as the most important problem



Note: $\chi^2 = 75.27$; $df = 5$; $p = 0.0001$; Question wording: Based on what you know, do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose putting a price or tax on fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas in order to reduce carbon emissions in Canada? And; In your opinion, what is the most important problem facing Canada today?

As shown in Figure 1, the proportion of respondents who strongly support a carbon tax is about twice as high among those who perceive the environment and climate change as being the most salient public problem (42%), relative to those who cite other issues (21%). While we still find majority support for a carbon tax among those who cite other issues as the most important problem (54%), the data in Figure 1 indicate that net support (i.e. total support minus total opposition) is substantially greater among those who perceive the environment and climate change to be high on the government agenda (63%) relative to those who cite other issues in their first MIP mentions (13%). We caution against making direct causal claims along the lines of “perceived salience causes increased support” (since something else might cause people to be more attentive to environmental issues and support carbon taxes). However, the results nevertheless suggest that, at the individual level, seeing and hearing about climate change is strongly associated with support for a carbon tax.

So who is more likely to cite the environment and climate change as being salient? As the Climate of Change 2018 cross-tabulated results (Nov.2018) show, there is considerable regional variation across what Canadians cite as being the most important problem, with residents of Quebec (36%) significantly more likely than residents of all other provinces to cite the environment and climate change as being the most important problem facing the country. One might speculate that this has to do with the Quebec media providing more coverage of this issue, though more detailed content analysis of media coverage across the country would be required to demonstrate this empirically. Beyond region, we found that citing either scientific reports or “seeing it in the news” when asked to explain why someone believes climate change is occurring increases the odds of perceiving the environment or climate change as the most important problem facing Canada by nearly 70% after controlling for region of residence, vote choice, gender and education. In other words, we have evidence to suggest that the increase in the proportion of Canadians who perceive the environment and climate change as the MIP is driven in large part by what Canadians were hearing and seeing in the news at the time the survey was conducted. We also note that citing dramatic changes in weather (in response to the question asking people to justify their position that the average temperature on Earth is warming) increases the odds of citing climate change or environmental issues as the most important problem facing Canada today, but its effect is smaller.

Recommendations:

1. Turn up the heat: In advance of the federal election, work with trusted sources such as university scientists, health professionals, community leaders, and other eNGOs to *amplify* and *increase the frequency* of messaging in the local, national and social media about the dual threats of climate change and environmental degradation.
2. Deepen engagement: Engage further in, and support others in advancing, respectful discussion with key audiences on climate change. While the instinct might be to communicate the increasingly severe risks of extreme weather, [some caution against this strategy](#): people may resist attributing local catastrophes to climate change and likely to increase in frequency, and extreme weather communication may create narratives of grief, suffering and blame, which complicate the issue. Rather than talk exclusively about threats, groups should also communicate messages of empowerment and future preparedness.

3. Talk about love: Raise money and/or pool resources to invest significantly in advertising across different media channels to a broad range of Canadians about the benefits of climate action for the places and things Canadians love most. This “[For the love of...](#)” campaign must be non-partisan, apolitical, balance concern and hope, and emphasize the benefits of acting now: e.g. healthy communities, healthy forests, clean lakes and rivers, enhanced prosperity, public health, etc.

Rationale:

The goal is not to convince. Canadians already know climate change is real and a problem. The goal is to get people to talk about climate change and perceive it as a salient issue that must be addressed over the next several months and years. Linking climate change to things Canadians care about and love can help strengthen the affective response through stories about and images depicting climate change effects on clean air and water, weather, food/farming, seasons, recreation and our way of life, health etc. Connecting things to what people love is a proven social marketing strategy. It’s no coincidence (though somewhat ironic) that large corporations (like GM and Molson) do a better job of appropriating the environment when marketing their products to Canadians. This strategy is based on the idea that

A national campaign could enhance the salience of climate change for the election

Canadians are proud of their environment and see themselves as good stewards of Canada’s natural beauty and natural resources (we saw this in the Panoramic 2018 survey as well). Canadians also love talking about the weather. It’s natural to go here. The idea is to keep climate change high in people’s minds, to open up new ways of thinking and talking about the issue, to make associations that might not have been there in the past. Canadians might not yet make the link with health, but they also identify strongly with health care and health is something that crosses partisan lines as something people care about. Moreover, people’s health is already being harmed by climate change, so public health professionals and their allies have a duty to inform communities about these risks. Whatever the framing, a coordinated, well-financed, national campaign could “prime” significant segments of the Canadian electorate to think about climate change and the threats it poses to what they love when casting their ballots.

Powerful words: health and diversification frames

The 2018 Climate of Change survey also included questions and experiments to test the use of language around health and diversification. This builds directly from the 2018 Panoramic survey, which found that exposure to a health narrative significantly increased perceptions that the energy transition is a good idea for Canada, though linking health to the energy transition was the least familiar idea to people in our sample. Building on findings from the [Alberta Narratives Project](#), we also sought to test, possibly for the first time, the idea that some segments of the Canadian population might be more open to language around “diversification” when talking about transitioning away from fossil fuels.

In the first split-ballot experiment, respondents were randomly presented with one of two slightly different versions of a statement, to which respondents were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed. Version A read, “More intense heat waves, floods, and wildfires make climate change **harmful to human health.**” Version B read “More intense heat waves, floods, and wildfires make climate change **a public health emergency.**” Thus, the only difference in question wording is that which is underlined above, and any difference observed in level of agreement may confidently be inferred to be the result of the changed language. After deleting “Not sure” responses and re-coding the variable from 0 (“Strongly disagree”) to 3 (“Strongly agree”) we analyzed the data with a simple “difference in means” test (student’s t-test) to compare the level of agreement with each statement. We found a significant difference in the scores for “harmful to human health” (M=2.49, SD=0.82) and “public health emergency” (M=2.39, SD=0.84) conditions; $t(1161)=1.86$, $p = 0.03$. These results suggest that using language around a public health emergency elicits less support, but while this difference is significant at conventional levels, it is limited in terms of size. Looking at the distribution of responses across the two alternate framings in the crosstabs, we see that the proportion of those who strongly agree with the health frame (64%) is larger than the percentage of respondents who strongly agree with the idea that climate change is a public health emergency (56%), but not by much (8%). This is mostly true across all regions, especially in Quebec (n=233) where the difference in means between the “urgence de santé publique” (M=2.62, SD=0.67) and the “nuisibles à la santé” (M=2.44, SD=0.72) conditions is largest and most statistically significant; $t(229)=1.89$, $p=0.03$. Another province that stands out is New Brunswick (n=214), which is the only place where the public health emergency language (M=2.57, SD=0.74) obtains a higher mean score than the more generic harmful to health (M=2.45, SD=0.80), but the relative difference is not large enough to obtain statistical significance; $t(212)=-1.08$, $p=0.14$.

Results from the second split-ballot are stronger. In this experiment, we randomly assigned respondents to one of two statements regarding the need for Canada to move away from the production of fossil fuels. Version A read, “Canada needs to quickly transition away from fossil fuels toward more renewable energy” while Version B read “Canada needs to quickly diversify its energy sources toward more renewable energy.” Both statements referred to renewable energy to provide a common anchor while testing the effect of different language, transition or diversification. After deleting “Not sure” responses and re-coding the variable from 0 (“Strongly disagree”) to 3 (“Strongly agree”) we analyzed the data with the same “difference in means” test to compare the level of agreement with each statement. We found a significant difference in the scores for the “transition” ($M=2.257$, $SD=0.976$) and “diversify” ($M=2.480$, $SD=0.812$) conditions; $t(1157)=-4.25$, $p = 0.0000$. This suggests that people are more likely to agree to Canada needing to diversify its energy sources than they are to agree to a transition away from fossil fuels. While this difference is found across a range of respondent characteristics (including language and gender), it is especially pronounced in Alberta where net agreement (i.e. total support minus total opposition) increases by 40% as the language shifts from transition ($M=1.35$, $SD=1.16$) to diversification ($M=1.79$, $SD=1.04$). This framing effect is also relatively large and significant in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, Ontario and the Atlantic provinces, though it is insignificant in British Columbia and Quebec.

Though not part of an experiment, we also fielded questions that might help advocates frame both campaigns on, and the more general conversation around, climate change. Consistent with the experiment on using language around the transition, we find substantial agreement—both strong (46%) and soft (34%)—with the statement that “The Canadian economy is too dependent on oil and gas; it would benefit from greater economic diversification.” We find majority support for this idea in all regions, including Alberta, though support tends to be more soft (37%) than strong (25%). In contrast, we find considerably less support (23% strong and 27% soft) for the statement, put forward by the Trudeau and Notley governments, that “The Canadian economy needs to diversify its export markets to sell more oil overseas.” As expected, this sentiment was especially pronounced in Alberta, with 50% of respondents from that region in strong agreement. Finally, we find considerable support—strong (39%) and soft (35%)—for the statement that “The places and people I love are going to be hurt by climate change.” This suggests that more testing is warranted to build a campaign around climate action “for the love of” these cherished things.

Recommendations:

1. Choose your words. This survey shows again that language makes a difference in engaging specific audiences: as noted in the next two recommendations.
2. Go slow with *emergency*: Climate change is not yet a “public health emergency” for some. While you may be tempted to talk about a public health emergency in the immediate aftermath of an extreme event closely linked (in the minds of most people) to global warming, there are risks associated with communicating such risks in a post-traumatic, sensitive context where opponents may seize the opportunity to criticize groups for using the suffering of others to pursue political ends (as happened after the 2016 Fort McMurray wildfires). Moreover, most Canadians do not yet think of climate change as a health issue; so this usage might backfire in some regions.
3. Reinforce the health link. Find ways to connect climate change to human health in the minds of Canadians. Rather than seizing the “health emergency” frame, invest for awhile in strengthening the cognitive association between climate change and human health. Repeat the direct and indirect health benefits of mitigation for communities and individuals (e.g. the direct effects of climate change impacts in terms of exacerbating existing health problems, like heat exhaustion and stroke, or indirect benefits of climate change action for cleaner air and water, more active lifestyles, etc). And ask medical professionals to deliver these messages: we have yet to test whether this would amplify the effects, but it will likely increase credibility.
4. Talk transition with some, diversification with others. Our latest Climate Survey suggests that when speaking to supporters of renewable energy proponents, or most British Columbians, it is fine to talk about the *energy transition*. It also shows that this language (which alludes to moving away from fossil fuels) could alienate some audiences; so if you want to engage Albertans talk *diversification*.

Rationale:

Language is powerful. Some words are effective at soliciting the kinds of emotional reactions that are consistent with what a communicator is trying to achieve. Other words can generate a negative affective response, and backfire. In the current context, partners need to be careful not to further polarize the electorate. We all know what’s happened in the U.S. This is not to say that groups need to mobilize people outside of their tent (although local community leaders might be mobilized

It may take time to build the link between health and climate action

to do so). But we need not antagonize certain sectors of society and contribute to further polarization. This is not to say that polarization won't happen. It will, as reactionary voices try to make climate action a wedge issue. But if partners succeed at making climate change salient, then groups (and political parties) opposed to climate change action will have painted themselves into a corner that is at odds with what Canadians think is important, and inconsistent with how Canadians view themselves: e.g., as caretakers of the environment. So it's important to be as open and inclusive as possible and not alienate potentially sympathetic segments of Canadian society. Avoid the loss frame. While the transition toward renewable energy, and the phase-out of fossil fuels, might be obvious and unavoidable, groups might want to think first about shifting the narrative toward the benefits of climate action. Why are you in this fight? Canadians want to protect their air, land and water. They want to live in healthy communities and be healthy themselves. The health frame may prove to be that positive frame that has eluded environmental groups for so long, and might also be one to bridge communication strategies between conservationist and more advocacy-focused groups. But health and the environment is not as cognitively accessible as one might think. It will take time to build this association. Luckily it's not that difficult to get people to go there. But partners—and their allies in the medical community—need to start now.

Talking about the tax

Recent polling suggests carbon price support might be [increasing](#), and that the recent federal government announcement on rebates to households might make the policy more politically acceptable. The most recent [Angus Reid](#) survey, for instance, found that 54% of those polled support the federal plan to price carbon. This figure is consistent with the most recent EcoAnalytics data (shown in Figure 1), which found clear majority support for a carbon price in 2018 (59%). While these results might be encouraging, our 2018 Climate of Change data show that support for carbon pricing continues to be soft (i.e. respondents are more likely to “somewhat support”) and that those with crystalized opinions are equally divided between strong support (26%) and strong opposition (23%). In fact, no less than a third (33%) of those polled in the October survey indicate they “somewhat” support a carbon tax, while soft opposition to the policy is relatively low (12%). Three challenges therefore present themselves: to consolidate strong support; to limit growth in strong opposition; and, ideally, to convert soft opposition to support.

The evidence suggests proponents of carbon pricing are not doing a very good job of reaching potential target audiences, and that there is a risk of further polarization. To show this, we first looked at how many people are actually paying attention to this debate, and find that about a third (28%) have heard “a lot” about the federal plan to put a price or tax on carbon emissions, another quarter (26%) report having heard “a moderate amount”, while another quarter (23%) report having heard “a little” or “nothing at all,” respectively. We further find that the effect of issue familiarity is polarizing, with equal pluralities of those reporting having heard “a lot” about the federal plan offering either strong support (38%) or strong opposition (38%). To better tease out these relationships, we ran a statistical model that predicted support for a carbon tax using the 2018 data, with a focus on looking at the role of self-reported issue familiarity among likely voters of the LPC, CPC, NDP and others, controlling for gender, education and region of residence. Results of this model are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Effect of familiarity with Pan Canadian Framework on Climate Change on support for carbon tax, conditional upon vote choice

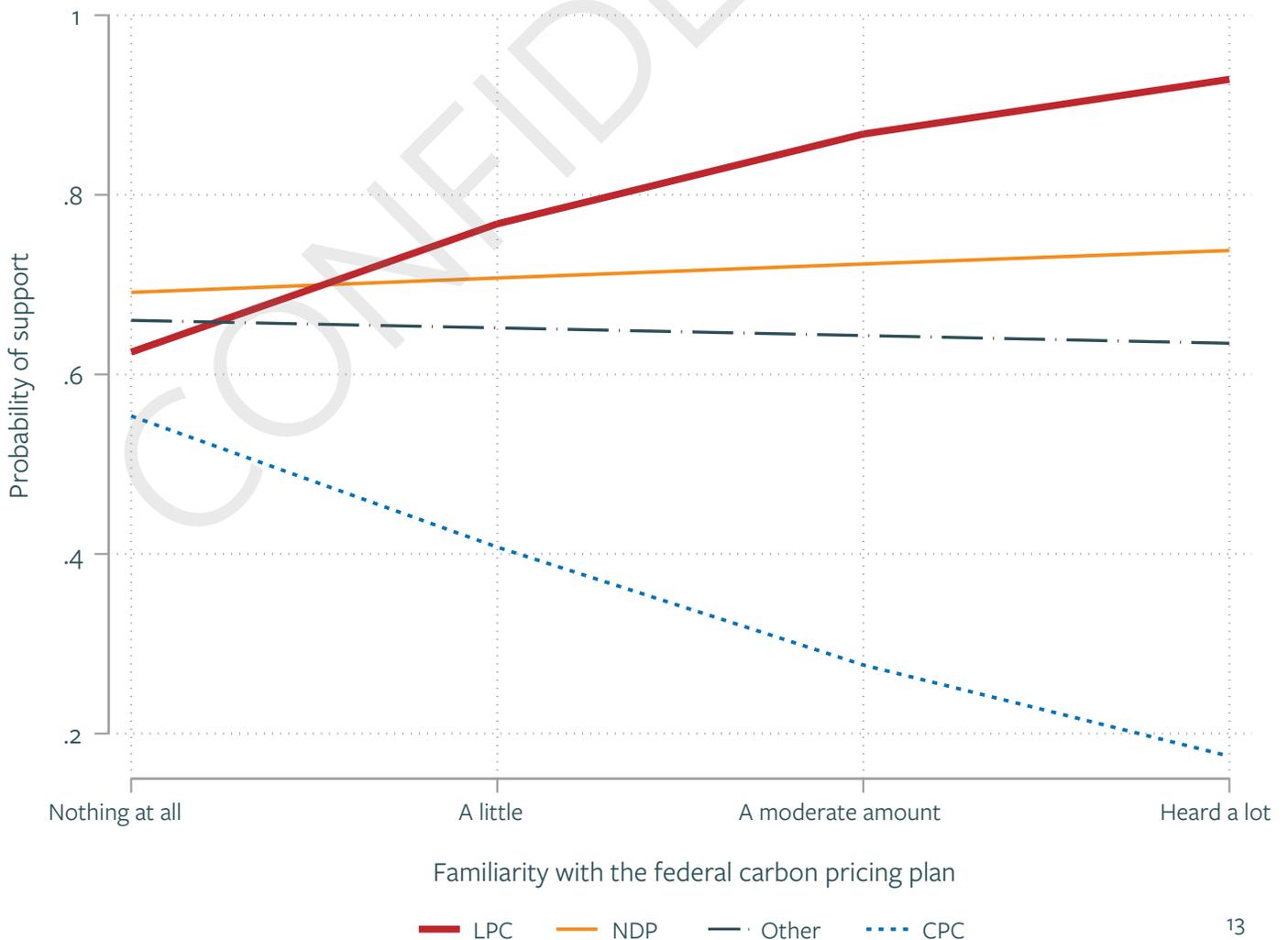


Figure 2 plots the predicted probability of supporting a carbon tax for likely NDP, LPC, CPC and “other” (i.e. Green, Bloc Québécois, the People’s Party, and undecided) voters at increasing levels of familiarity with the federal carbon pricing plan. Note that when individuals have heard “Nothing at all” about the plan, the baseline probabilities converge near the 0.6 mark, indicating a 60% chance of support (regardless of vote choice) when all other variables in the model are set at their means. From here, an increase in self-reported familiarity has different effects across the four types of voters. For supporters of the Liberals, increasing familiarity with the carbon price plan significantly increases the probability of support, from 60% to 90%. The effect is the opposite for supporters of the Conservatives. For likely Conservative voters the probability of support is 60% when they have heard little, indicating they many are not opposed to the idea of carbon pricing in

Supporters of carbon pricing might invest more in persuading undecided voters and those who do not back the main parties

principle. But as they become more informed, the probability of support plummets to 1 in 5. This suggests that supporters of the LPC and CPC are exposed to different kinds of (mis)information and that proponents and opponents of the federal plan are effectively reaching their respective audiences. Conversely, the effect of issue familiarity has virtually no effect on supporters of the NDP, other parties, as well as undecided voters (the latter two groups make up the “Other” category). The non-effect of familiarity among these groups suggests proponents of carbon pricing are failing to engage these other audiences, and that more work can be done here to convert soft to strong support. Results also suggest that these segments might be vulnerable to misinformation campaigns, pointing to the importance of developing effective counter-strategies.

To better meet the objectives of consolidating support, and minimizing the risks of further polarization, groups first need to know who to target. The data in Figure 2 suggest more work needs to be done to engage the NDP, Greens, Bloc Québécois, undecided voters, and more Canadians who are inclined to vote Conservative. Data gleaned from the Climate of Change 2018 crosstabs provide further insight on who to target, as the tables show considerable variation in carbon tax support across the country. If the goal is to consolidate support among segments of society with large proportions who “somewhat support” a carbon price, then key targets would include Canadians aged 18–34 (43%), supporters of the LPC (37%), likely NDP voters (38%), and Canadians for whom English or French is not their first language (40%).

If the goal is to limit polarization, however, it would make sense to target Conservatives with messages that counter negative framing of the federal plan. Indeed, our Climate of Change data (and other research) indicate that there is

potential to increase support for carbon pricing by targeting Conservative segments. As mentioned, Figure 2 suggests likely Conservative voters are not opposed in principle to carbon pricing, but that they become strongly opposed as they are exposed to negative framing of the federal plan. Moreover, as shown in the 2018 Climate of Change crosstabs, a third of likely federal Conservative voters either strongly support (7%) or somewhat support (22%) putting a price on fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas to reduce GHG emissions. These results come from a question that was posed immediately after a question making specific reference to the Trudeau government plan to price carbon. We also find a majority of likely Conservative voters either strongly (18%) or somewhat (36%) support cap and trade in their province.

More research is needed on what to say to these different audiences, as other EcoAnalytics studies have recently suggested. For instance, the Climate of Change 2017 Research Note, “Building support for carbon pricing among Canadians” suggests an effective frame for mobilizing support is to remind audiences that Canadians are already experiencing climate change here and now, and that mitigation reduces climate risks. This frame provides a normative justification for carbon pricing as a basic safety measure. The data analyzed in this briefing also indicate the value of talking about the benefits of carbon pricing for consumers: e.g., making clean energy, electric vehicles and other alternatives more affordable. Additional research conducted by EcoAnalytics in the 2018 Panoramic Survey (“Talking about the energy transition”) provides evidence that a health frame can help increase positive evaluations of the energy transition. A working paper by Dr. Louise Comeau, Erick Lachapelle and David Wutchiett, meanwhile, suggests both a “polluter-pay” frame and, for some audiences, an “economist consensus” frame, can help boost perceptions of the fairness and effectiveness of carbon pricing, and ultimately support for this policy, even in the presence of a negative cost-frame. These resources are available to EcoAnalytics Partners and should be used as part of their communications about carbon pricing. What is missing are more detailed analyses of which frames resonate most with which audiences (this work is forthcoming) as well as which trusted information sources are best suited to deliver these messages (research yet to be conducted).

Recommendations:

1. Don't shy away from the debate. While it's unwise to lead with carbon pricing, it's not productive to abandon the federal government as it struggles to communicate the benefits and necessity of its climate policies.

2. Know your targets. If the goal is to consolidate support, communications should be directed toward segments with relatively large proportions of soft support for carbon pricing, such as youth, people with neither English nor French as their first language, likely LPC voters, NDP voters, undecided voters, Greens and Bloc Québécois.
3. Don't forget Conservatives. Our data clearly indicate that a substantial plurality of more conservative segments in Canada are not opposed to carbon pricing in principle. This may be an untapped source of support. At a minimum, an effort should be made to limit this segment contributing to further polarization of opinion about carbon pricing by using some of the counter-arguments found to be effective in EcoAnalytics and other research.

Rationale:

There are some positive signs. Consistent with top-down elite theories of public opinion formation, in which partisans take cues from their preferred party leaders, supporters of the Liberals who are most familiar with the federal plan almost unanimously support a carbon price, and the discourse around carbon pricing appears to be changing (somewhat) in that it is now framed around a response to the increasing risks of climate change for Canadians. However, there are signs that proponents are losing the battle, and the risks of further polarization are real. The issue is increasingly politicized with people being forced into their camps, which may potentially taint the climate change debate more generally. You have an opportunity to bring moderate conservatives onside, yet proponents of climate action don't appear to be seizing this. More can be done to engage moderate Conservatives who care about the environment, conservation, and are open to carbon pricing, though more work is required to identify the right messengers.

A substantial plurality of Conservatives in Canada are not opposed to carbon pricing, in principle

Conclusion

Today's political context presents advocates of climate change action with important challenges *and* opportunities. The key challenge is to maintain the salience of climate change in public discourse in the coming months and run up to the next federal election, in 2019. This is the best option for creating the conditions in which people have a rationale for supporting government action on climate change (like carbon pricing) and for providing a context in which voters consider climate change action when casting their ballots. It's important, however, to communicate in ways that do not drive more people toward the poles of opinion about climate action, as this may be counter-productive, and foreclose on opportunities to engage a broader spectrum of Canadians. To this end, certain target audiences, language and messages are suggested here to be used in a coordinated fashion by Canada's environmental movement. Groups may also want to consider a broad, national campaign aimed at simply getting Canadians to talk about, and connect climate change to, the things they love that are in harm's way. Coming research may wish to focus on the images and messengers that are most effective, credible and relatable in this effort to keep climate change high in the public mind.

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