



# ENVIRONMENTAL ATTITUDES AND COVID-19

REPORT ON ROUND 2 OMNIBUS QUESTIONS  
February 2021



**ENVIRONICS**  
RESEARCH

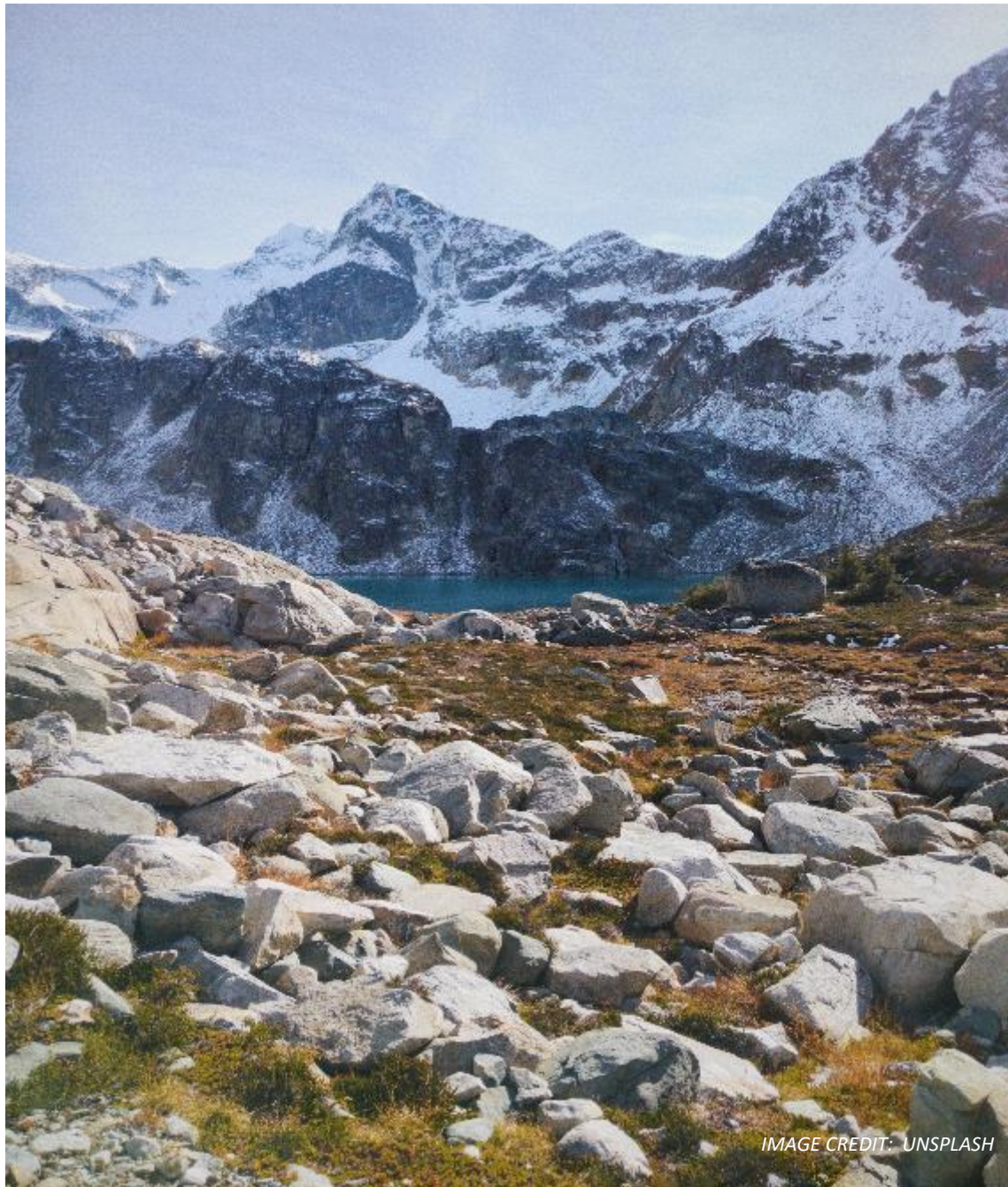


IMAGE CREDIT: UNSPLASH

# Table of Contents

Executive summary	3
Key findings	4
Methodology	10

# Executive summary

**Accountability:** Previous research for Ecojustice found that, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, Canadians believe (a) strict targets will be needed against which to measure progress, and (b) those targets will need to be mandatory/legally-binding rather than voluntary. Yet **public support for such laws could be undermined by doubt about their effectiveness:** only two in ten believe they would be very effective at ensuring polluters meet their emission reduction targets. Similarly, **relatively few envision oil & gas as part of the equation:** only four in ten believe Canada can continue to produce oil & gas and still achieve net zero emissions, although this view reaches majority level in Alberta (53%).

**Just transition:** Canadians, by a strong margin, **believe governments (71%) rather than workers and communities (29%) are responsible for leading the transition** from fossil fuels to a low-carbon economy. This view is consistent across regions and demographic groups. Furthermore, **half of Canadians strongly agree we need to act now** to prevent vulnerable populations from being negatively impacted by climate change, as they have been by the pandemic.

**Nature based solutions:** The terms ‘green infrastructure’ (21%) and ‘nature-based solutions’ (20%) **resonate equally well but not particularly strongly**, and one in four Canadians don’t feel any of the six tested terms capture the idea, suggesting any chosen term will require time and education for the public to grasp. There are **mixed views about where to create new protected areas**, with a slim majority who feel they are more important in cities (55%) than in remote areas (45%; except in Manitoba/Saskatchewan where the latter is favoured).

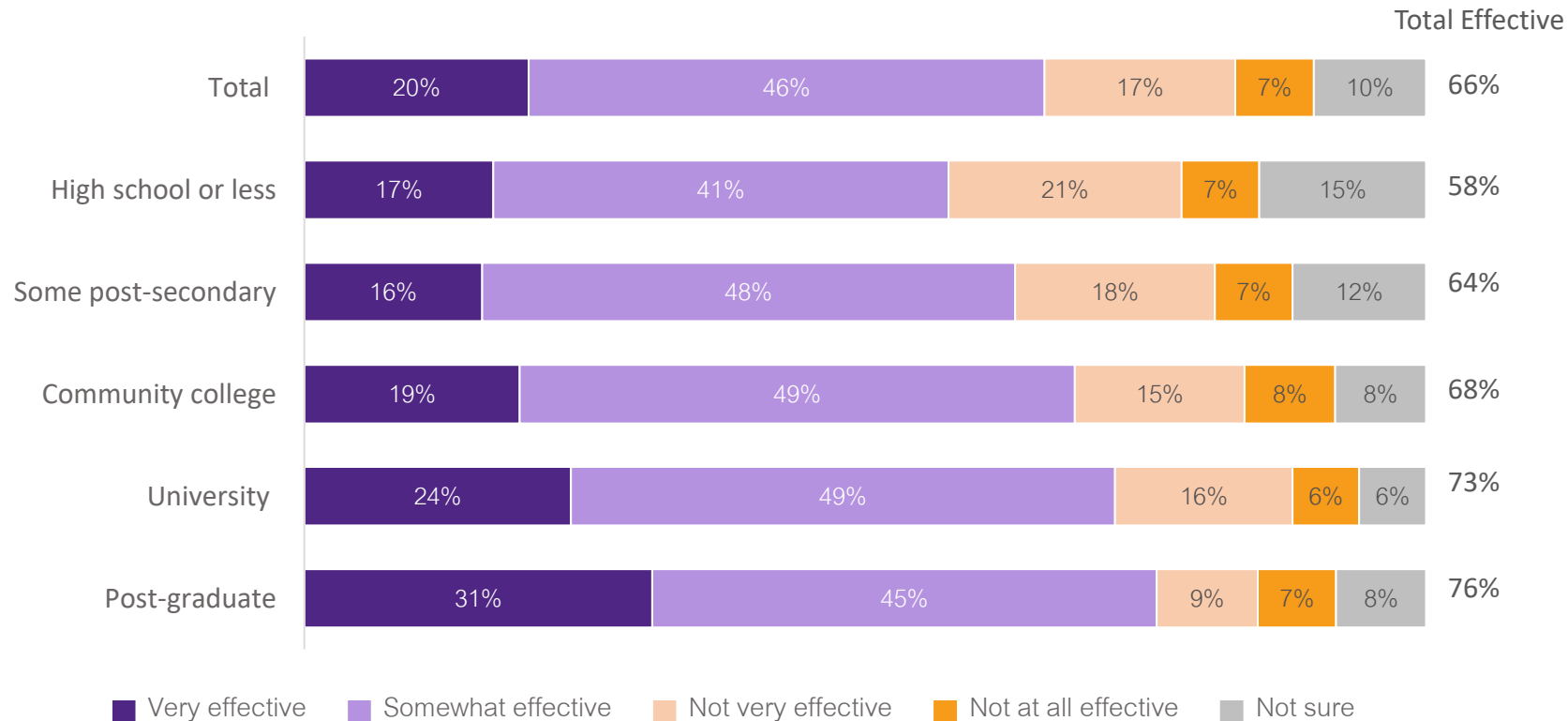


IMAGE CREDIT:  
UNSPLASH

# VIEWS ON EMISSION REDUCTION TARGETS

Canadians are more optimistic than not that a legally-binding target would help hold polluters accountable for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but only two in ten are convinced it would be a very effective solution.

Q1. Some people have argued that, to make serious progress on climate change, Canada will need to set mandatory targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions that governments and industry are legally required to meet. How effective do you think it would be to use a law to ensure governments and industry meet their targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions?

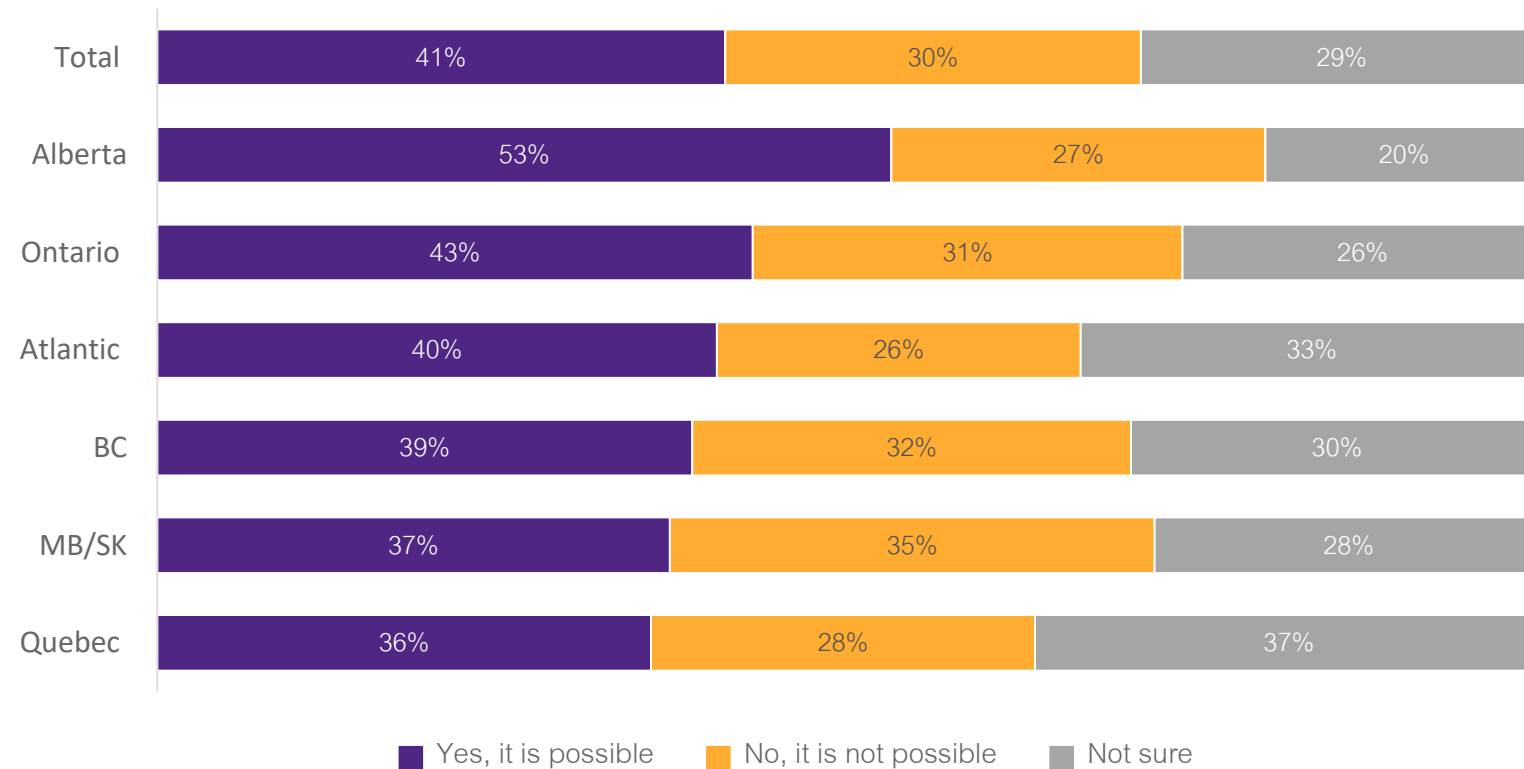


Strong optimism about the effectiveness of legally-binding emission reduction targets is higher among Canadians under 50 (25% very effective), those who identify as BIPOC (26%) and those with higher levels of education.

## IS NET ZERO POSSIBLE WITH OIL AND GAS PRODUCTION?

Fewer than half of Canadians believe oil & gas can be part of a net zero future, although this view reaches majority level in Alberta.

Q2. Canada has set a climate goal of reducing its greenhouse gas emissions to “net zero” by 2050. “Net zero” means achieving a balance between the greenhouse gases put into the atmosphere and those taken out through carbon-capture technologies or natural systems like forests. Do you believe it is possible or is not possible for Canada to meet its goal of “net zero” while continuing to produce oil and gas?

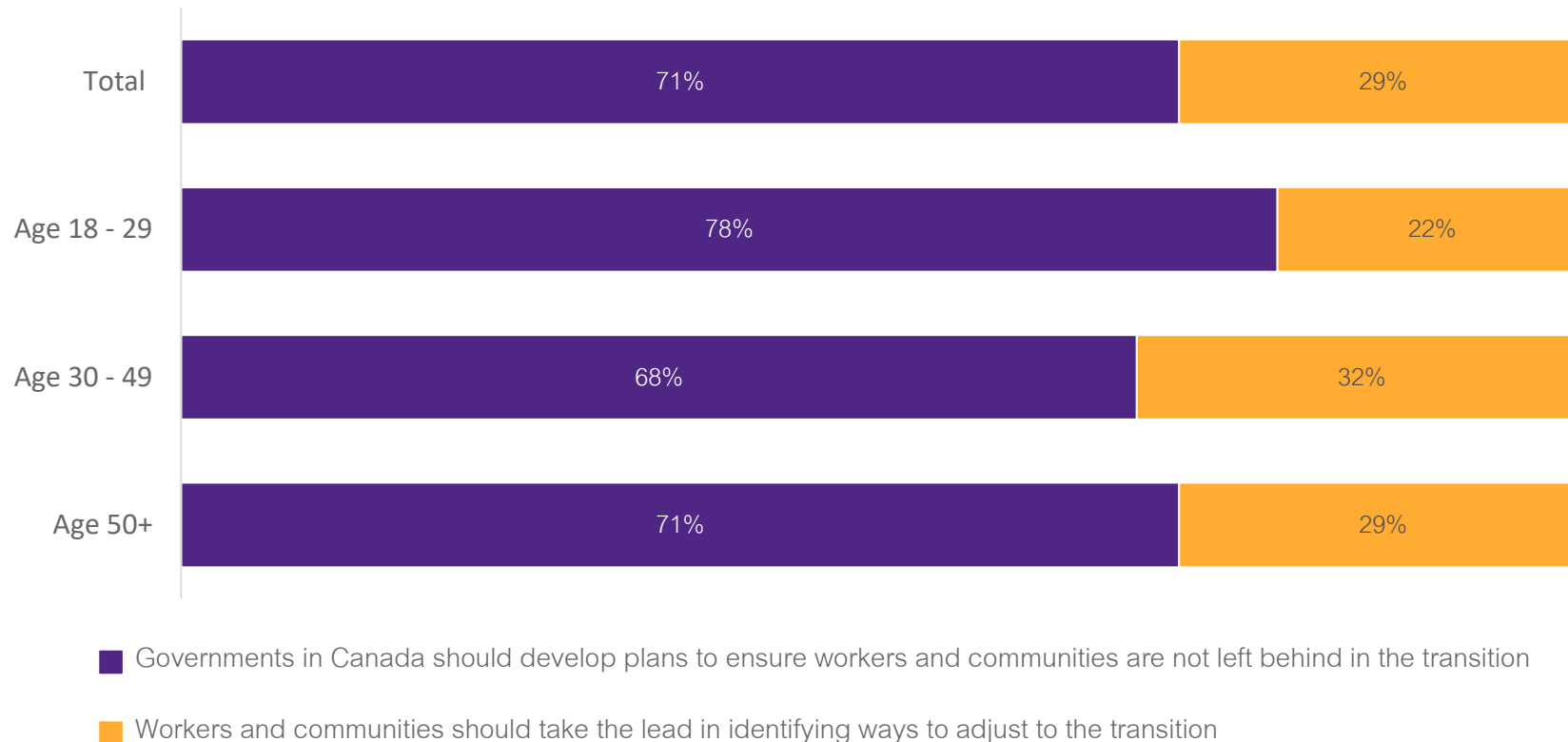


Optimism that oil & gas production can coexist with net zero emissions is held by a majority of younger Canadians (57% aged 18-29), those who identify as BIPOC (53%), and Green Party (59%) and Liberal (51%) supporters. This view is also higher among men (46%) and increases with income level.

# RESPONSIBILITY TO LEAD JUST TRANSITION

By a more than two-to-one margin, Canadians believe the onus falls on governments to ensure that workers and communities are not left behind in the transition to a low-carbon economy.

Q3. Significant cuts to greenhouse gas emissions as Canada transitions to a low-carbon economy will impact workers and communities that depend on fossil fuel industries. Which view is closer to your own?

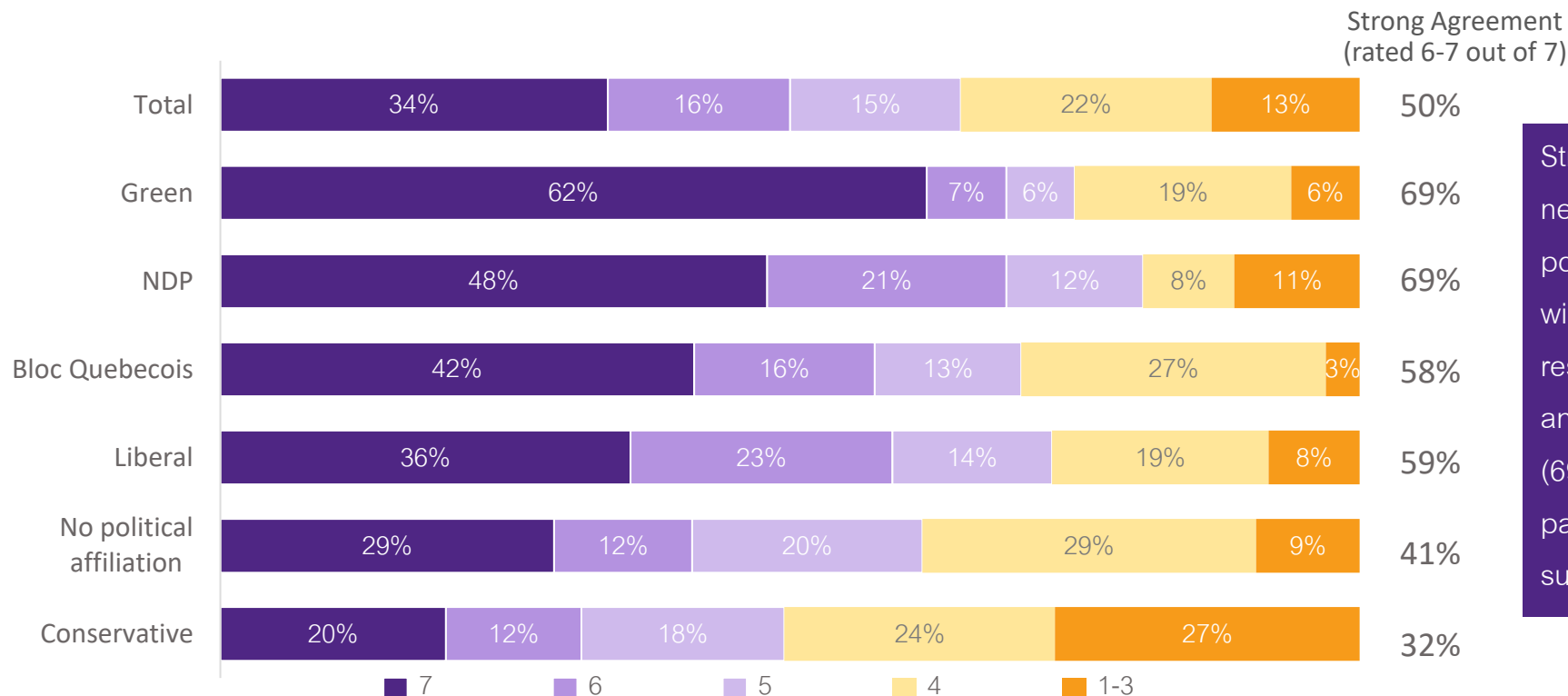


Majorities in all regions and demographic groups think governments should take the lead, in supporting workers in the low-carbon transition, but this view is strongest among younger Canadians aged 18-29 (78%) and NDP supporters (80%).

# PERCEIVED IMPACT ON VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Half of Canadians strongly agree (rating of 6-7 out of 7) we need to act now to prevent vulnerable populations from being negatively impacted by climate change, as they have been by the pandemic.

Q4. There is evidence the COVID-19 pandemic has had a bigger impact on more vulnerable populations, such as lower-income families, Black, Indigenous and people of colour, older people and those with underlying health conditions. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: We need to act now to prevent vulnerable populations from being negatively impacted by climate change, as they have been by the pandemic.

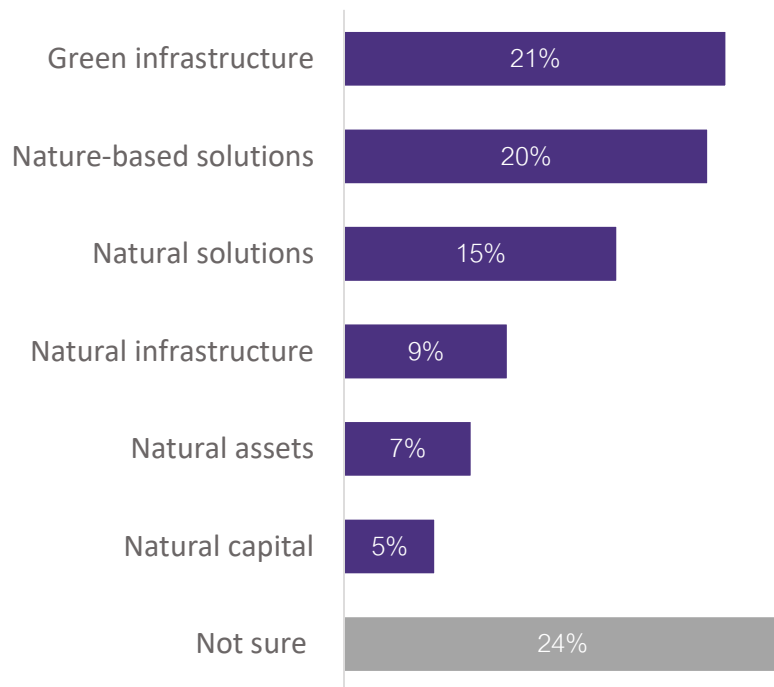


Strong agreement (ratings of 6-7) with the need for efforts to protect vulnerable populations from climate change is more widespread among women (54%), residents of the Atlantic provinces (57%) and Quebec (55%), and Green Party (69%) and NDP (69%) supporters; it is particularly low among Conservative supporters (32%).

# IDEAL TERMINOLOGY FOR SOLUTIONS

The terms 'green infrastructure' and 'nature-based solutions' resonate equally well with Canadians overall; however, one quarter did not feel any of the terms encapsulate the idea.

Q5. In your opinion, which of the following terms best reflects the idea of protecting, restoring and expanding nature so it continues to provide essential benefits and services to people, biodiversity and the climate?



Preference for the term 'green infrastructure' is higher among men (25%) and those with higher levels of education.

The term 'nature-based solutions' is the top preference for older Canadians (24% aged 50+), Quebec residents (25%) and Conservative supporters (22%).

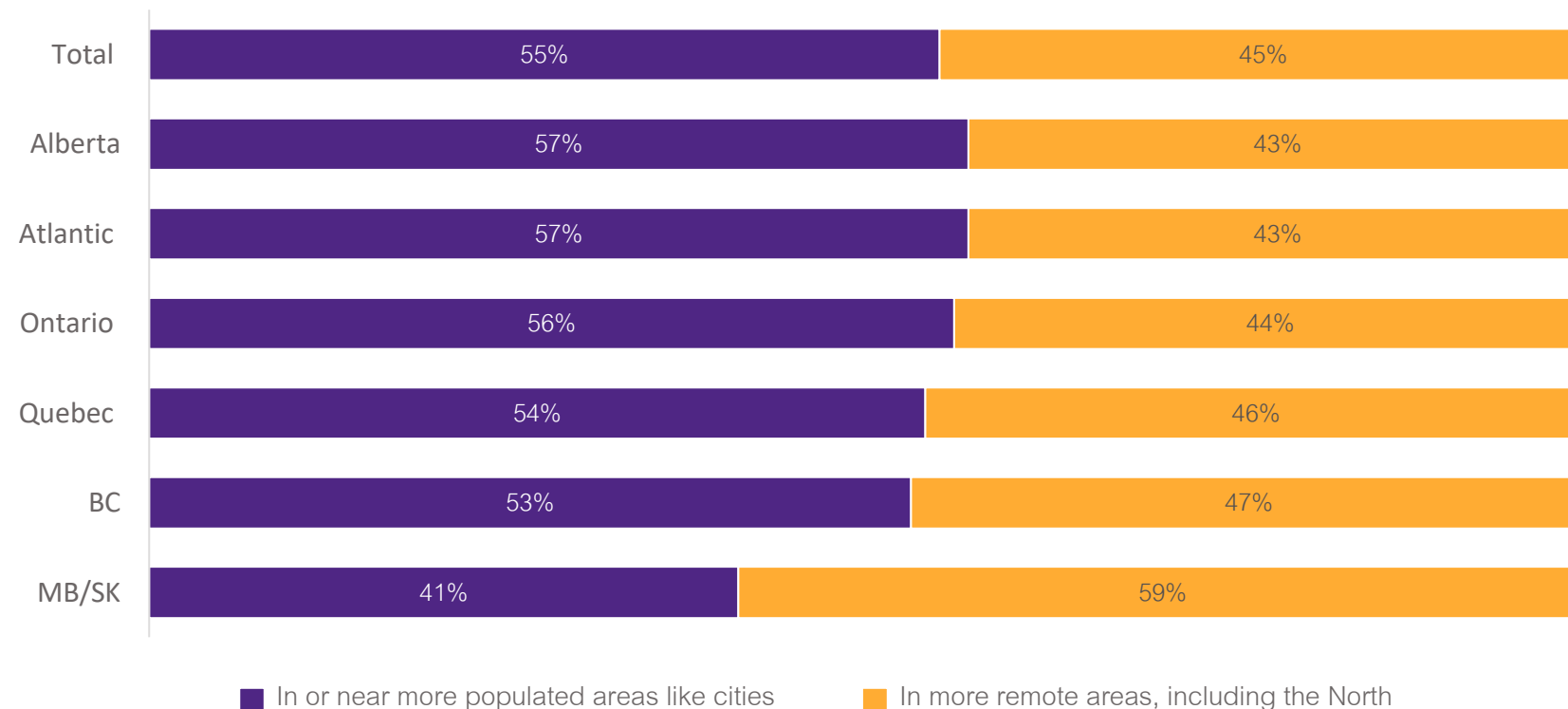
The tendency to say they are not sure which term best reflects the idea is higher among women, and those with lower socioeconomic status, reflecting potential challenges in communicating this complex idea.



# PROTECTING LAND IN URBAN OR REMOTE AREAS

Slim majorities of Canadians across most regions express a preference for protecting nature in cities over remote areas; the exception is Manitoba and Saskatchewan, where six in ten residents favour the latter.

Q6. The Government of Canada has committed to protecting 30 percent of Canada's land mass by 2030. In your view, which of the following is more important for Canada to consider when creating new protected areas?



Prioritizing protected areas in urban centres is more widespread among older Canadians (59% aged 50+), while Canadians under 50 are equally divided between the two viewpoints.

The subgroups that prioritize remote areas over cities are NDP (54%) and Bloc (53%) supporters and residents of MB/SK (59%).



# Methodology

- Online survey with 1018 Canadian adults
- Field dates: February 18 – 22 , 2021
- **Representative sample:** Final data are weighted to ensure the sample composition represents the actual Canadian population.

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	Unweighted n	Weighted n
Atlantic	71	71
Quebec	268	255
Ontario	403	415
Manitoba/Saskatchewan	60	63
Alberta	105	104
British Columbia	111	111

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