

EcoA Tips

Notes & news from EcoAnalytics Research

Welcome to the third edition of our EcoAnalytics newsletter. Scroll on for this *tip-a-licious* spring fare:

Five tips on productive conversations about the environment in the run-up to a federal election and beyond

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Youth climate protest, Montreal, 2019. *Radu Stancescu via Unsplash*

Five tips on productive conversations about the environment in the run-up to a federal election and beyond

Tip 1: Swing for Reformers

In advance of the next federal election and beyond, try engaging older, university-educated Canadians of various political stripes who agree that governments and industry are largely responsible for the climate emergency, but are unsure what to do about it. These moderate *Reformers*, nearly half of all Canadians, share many concerns of more radically minded individuals, but you won't get far with narratives about the systemic economic and colonial roots of climate change. Instead, try talking to them about proven climate policies, beginning perhaps with nature-based solutions (a fairly safe bet). Research shows that people will back policies that they believe are effective. Focus these efforts on competitive urban ridings in Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia — you're not only liable to be on target, but you might also find new allies. These tips echo findings of Research Partner Erick Lachapelle's analytical brief "[Who do Canadians blame for climate change?](#)" (Feb. 2021) and data from our Climate of Change Survey conducted in Oct.–Nov. 2020. Lachapelle contrasts *Reformers* with two other main clusters — *Radicals*, 27%, who point the finger at systems as well as industry and governments; and *Rejectors*, 23%, who blame nobody — and notes that *Reformers* are two or three times more likely than the others to reside in competitive federal ridings. See the appendix in the brief for which ones. And for further practical advice on engaging the so-called *Movable Middle* of Canadian society (many *Reformers* likely fall into this cluster) see a report shared last month by Climate Access: "[What do Canadians really think about climate change?](#)"

Tip 2: Demand that our leaders lead

With a federal election on the horizon, engage the public by emphasizing the responsibility of the feds to ensure that workers and communities dependent on fossil fuel industries are not left behind in a just transition to a low-carbon economy. Majorities in all regions and demographic segments think governments should lead on this issue, rather than leaving workers and communities to fend for themselves. In swing ridings where the youth or NDP vote could be decisive, this messaging may be particularly powerful, as support for this view is strongest among youth, 19–29 (78%), students (88%), and supporters of the NDP (80%) who agree that "Governments in Canada should develop plans to ensure workers and communities are not left behind in the transition." Communicating about the government's responsibility does not seem to be polarized, so you can broach the topic without the risk of alienating people. For further detail, see Environics [report](#) on its national Omnibus survey for EcoAnalytics, and the [cross-tabulated results](#).



Transition man: Brandon Sandmaier (seen in both photos) now manages operations for an Alberta solar company, after 10 years in the tar sands where he repaired 400-ton haul trucks. *Courtesy of Brandon Sandmaier and the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology.*

Tip 3: Highlight leadership of impacted communities

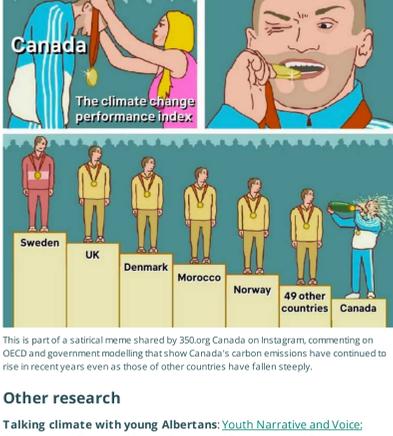
An Environics national omnibus survey conducted in February for EcoAnalytics found that large majorities of respondents agreed that Canada needs "to act now to prevent vulnerable populations from being negatively impacted by climate change, as they have been by the pandemic." Supporters of the Green Party and NDP (69%), Atlantic residents (57%), Quebecers (55%), and women (54%) are most likely to strongly agree. This public sensitivity provides an opportunity to communicate about inequitable climate risks — and the urgent need for mitigation. Be careful, however, when doing this. Avoid narratives that focus exclusively on negative impacts; instead, underscore the root causes and emphasize the resilience of affected communities, using *strength-based* narratives. As stated in a 2021 [Indigenous Climate Action Report](#) that critiqued federal climate plans, climate solutions "need to take aim at the ongoing drivers and root causes of the crisis and should centre the voices, needs and leadership of the people most impacted by the crisis." Why? Because deficit-focused frames risk hiding root causes and perpetuating narratives that systematically exclude equity-seeking groups from decision-making processes. For example, the same report found that some government climate solutions "ignore the realities faced by Indigenous Peoples...and overlook the structural inequalities continuously reproduced through colonial relations and oppressive structures" and may "lead to disproportionate negative impacts on Indigenous Peoples and violations of Indigenous rights." Strength-based framing also recognizes the work already being done by communities and their position to lead in solutions, rather than reproducing colonial narratives of saviorism.

Tip 4: Engage youth and BIPOC on pathways to net-zero

Youth and Canadians who identify as Black, Indigenous and People of Colour are among those most likely to believe that Canada can reduce its carbon emissions to "net-zero" by 2050, "while still continuing to produce oil and gas." It is, therefore, worth testing ways of engaging these groups in campaigns aimed at raising awareness about the actual pathways to net-zero and the policy measures and changes needed to get there. This was one of the findings of an Environics national omnibus survey for EcoAnalytics, Feb. 18–22. The results show in most provinces only about 40% of residents believed it was possible to get to "net-zero" while still drilling and digging for oil, though over half of Albertans felt it could be done. The survey found that supporters of the Green Party (59%) and Liberal Party (51%) as well as Canadians aged 18–29 (57%) and those who identify as BIPOC (53%) were more likely to agree. The readiness of youth to believe that solutions are possible (accommodating both the demands of industry and environmental needs) is a curious finding which calls for further research, however, Environics notes that its survey sample (n=1,018) skewed younger among those identified as BIPOC. Whatever the explanation, other research shows that people are far more likely to get behind policy measures that they believe are effective — e.g., pushing for net-zero. So, map out the pathways that would get Canada to net-zero, and you will help build a stronger, better informed constituency for sweeping aside the barriers to decarbonizing Canada's economy.

Tip 5: Blame Canada

Canada is a laggard in the global race to slash carbon pollution, but many Canadians think we are among the world leaders, according to a [summary](#) of Canadian opinion about climate change in 2020 shared last month by Climate Access. Given this, you might wish to point out, tactfully, to concerned but disengaged, yet patriotic, demographic groups that carbon emissions have declined significantly in most other G7 economies (30% in the UK) while Canada's have increased since 1990. Use this to open conversations, then pivot to specific solutions. EcoAnalytics research suggests that a great many of us can't name a single policy; so describe what we need to do in plain language and make it clear that our country needs to *get with program fast* if we are to remain competitive with the United States. Note too that Biden's administration is making the pitch that "[tackling climate change will create jobs, not kill them](#)." Our latest Climate of Change Survey, fall 2020, meanwhile, found that a subset of Canadians, so-called *Radicals*, believe that governments and the fossil fuels industry are responsible for climate change (see [Who do Canadians blame for climate change?](#)). Work on mobilizing this group to hold these actors accountable for their roles in causing climate change and their subsequent failure to act. *Radicals* tend to be urban, university-educated, left-leaning, and women. They are also more likely to live in safe electoral districts in Ontario and Quebec and be represented by Liberal MPs. If you're looking to push a more ambitious agenda, try mobilizing them by underlining the gap between where Canada is and where we need to be.



This is part of a satirical meme shared by 350.org Canada on Instagram, commenting on OECD and government modelling that show Canada's carbon emissions have continued to rise in recent years even as those of other countries have fallen steeply.

Other research

Talking climate with young Albertans: [Youth Narrative and Voice: Principles for Effective Climate, Energy and Environmental Education in Alberta](#) is a new report by U.K.-based Climate Outreach that draws on research in 2019 and detailed conversations with teachers to propose 10 principles for effective climate, energy, and environmental education in Alberta. These offer practical guidance for countering low levels of climate literacy, and high levels of "eco-anxiety".

"If it is for youth, it should be by youth": Indigenous Climate Action has done a [needs assessment](#) to better understand how to engage Indigenous youth interested in climate advocacy. Participants were asked about their motivations and barriers to involvement, their knowledge and skill set, and how ICA might help them get involved.

Alone and grouchy, one year in: [Abacus polling](#) in 2020–2021 offers a glimpse of how we're all feeling about collective action, mental health and inequality 12 months into the pandemic. Though the pandemic began with calls to come together, Abacus' data indicates our *kumbaya*-moment has given way to a sense of disconnection and social isolation across different demographics. Pollster Oksana Kishchuk says this may impact the salience of public messages around the need to band together, and undermine Canadians' mental health in the long-term.

Spring and summary: Be sure to check out a thorough and accessible [summary](#) (yes, pun intended) by Climate Access of Canadian public opinion research conducted in 2020, full of useful, succinct guidance on understanding and engaging different audiences. [What do Canadians really think about climate change?](#) advises that communicators should use descriptive naming — "80% of Canadians agree that climate change is urgent and needs action now" — to "break down climate silence and remind people that they are not alone."

Other useful links:

- [Trends in millennial behaviour on social media](#), *Abacus*
- [Thoughts on the federal election](#) by *Angus Reid & Abacus*
- [Climate anxiety & race](#), *Scientific American*



Artful policy: Toronto-based artist Klara Vanzella Yang has created a beautiful set of EcoA postcards, including this one. Enter now to win a set by referring us to one of your colleagues through this [form](#) (psst: your odds are good) *KW Studio*

EcoA news

Collaborators wanted for NbS test

Our February omnibus survey asked Canadians to choose a term that best reflects protecting, restoring, and expanding nature so it continues to provide essential benefits and services to people, biodiversity and the climate. None of the terms proposed were highly favoured though 21% opted for "green infrastructure" and 20% chose "nature-based solutions" (NbS). This presents an opportunity, and so we are looking for Members and Subscribers willing to use their social media channels to test how different terms work with different demographics. Interested? If so, please let us know [via this very short form](#).

Free subscriptions

EcoAnalytics is now welcoming applications for three bursaries, providing full annual subscriptions to highly engaged students and other champions of environmental protection (including volunteer groups). The aim is to broaden access to our products and services by supporting highly committed agents of change. Members and Subscribers are encouraged to share the [application form](#) and invite good candidates — in particular those from demographic groups underrepresented in Canada's environmental movement. *The deadline for applications is Monday, May 31, 3pm ET.*

Spring renewal

EcoAnalytics financial year ended Mar. 31, so we will be sending out renewal notices to all Members and Subscribers whose subscriptions have expired. Questions? Contact James Boothroyd, Project Director.

Evaluation

At the end of each issue of EcoA Tips we give you an opportunity to dish: share what you think — honestly! — about the newsletter, and rate us outta 10. So far, your ratings (and frequent openings of the newsletter) suggest you like this news vehicle. And last week we landed our first 10 out of 10 — for which we say, humbly, about time!

Comin' up

These are some important dates in the busy months ahead:

April

- 1** Beginning of fiscal year 2022; Subscription renewal time for nine EcoA groups
- 7** Research webinar on Environics Omni survey results and UdeM segmentation analysis of supporters of Member groups
- 12** (week of) Members decide on focus of spring research

May

- 24** (week, approximately) Spring wave of research begins
- 31** Deadline for bursary applications

June

- 7** EcoA Tips newsletter #4
- 21** (week of, approximately) First results of Spring research shared

Tell us what you liked...

And how this newsletter could work harder for you by completing this [quick survey](#).

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