



# Mapping Canada

## Engaging Canada's *Disengaged Middle*

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 EcoAnalytics

A project of  
 MakeWay

# What's in this slide deck?

- Review research objectives and national findings
- Overview of Canadian sub-segmentations
  - Working class
  - Rural/urban/suburban
- Focus on the *Disengaged Middle sub-segment*, and barriers and opportunities for engaging them

# Objectives of CA-MAP research project

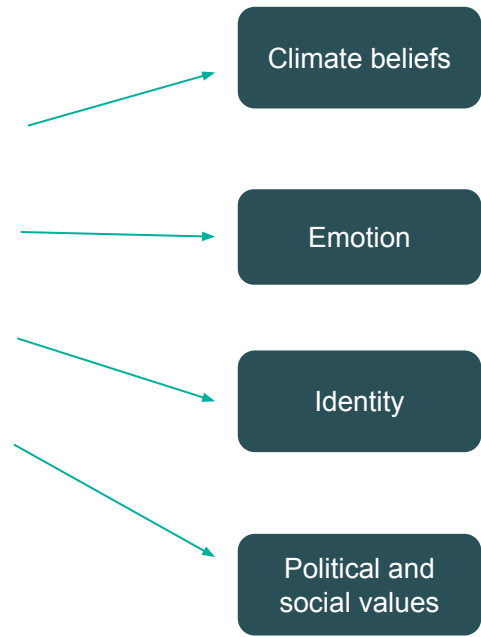
- Improve understanding of opinions and values of middle- and working-class Canadians at national and regional levels
- Identify value predispositions across segments and develop messages and messengers to test in focus groups
- Identify patterns that emerge across regions
- *Improve understanding of sub-segments (this webinar)*
- *Develop battery of questions for segmentation in future research & campaigns (this webinar)*
- Identify coalitions of voters for campaigns to *get out the environmental vote*

# Methods

- Pre-test (October 2023)
  - Online sample (n=935) from BC, AB, ON and QC
  - Tailor items from UK/USA studies for Canadian survey and determine which survey questions are most predictive in segmentation model
- National online sample (20-30 November 2023)
  - 195+ questions, n=6,142, at least 1000 each from BC, AB, SK/MB, ON, QC, Atlantic (focus on NS & NB)
  - Education quota to ensure large sample from working class (1,175 with high school or less; 1,135 with some college; 1,387 with college or technical degree)
- Follow-up focus groups by Re-Climate, March 2024
  - Drawn from the national sample and filtered by segment
  - Drill deeper into key segments: key concerns, trusted messengers and narratives that resonate



# Segmentation criteria



# Sub-segmentations overview

# What we did

- Three additional segmentations, in addition to the national and regional, discussed in first and second webinar decks
- These reflected preferences of EcoAnalytics' members, as expressed in poll
- Middle class came out on top, followed by Urban/Rural/Suburban
- Lots of interest in the "Moveable Middle"
- Here we summarize findings on Working class/Urban/Rural/Suburban segments and ...
- Look closely at the "Disengaged middle", 30% of all respondents

# Working class Canadians

- Sub-segmentation of individuals self-identified as lower-class, working poor and working-class (n=1,629)
- Results align closely with national segmentation:
  - Progressive activists (PA) : 14% (vs. 15% nationally)
  - Civic nationals (CN): 20% (vs. 21% nationally)
  - Centrist liberals (CL): 19% (vs. 20% nationally)
  - Disengaged middle (DM): 31% (vs. 30% nationally)
  - Fossil fuel conservatives: 17% (vs. 14% nationally)
- Main national segmentation results reflect findings for working-class only segmentation
  - Egalitarian worldviews shared among PA, CN, and CL
  - Populist framing resonates strongly
  - Strong sense of national pride across all working-class segments
  - High support for conservation and clean energy initiatives among target audiences
- Results reflected our expectations, as national sample is primarily middle- & working-class Canadians



# Urban Canadians

- Sub-segmentation of urban Canadians (n = 3,712) produces similar results to national segmentation, although distribution of respondents varies slightly:
  - PA: 19% (vs. 15% nationally)
  - CN: 18% (vs. 21% nationally)
  - CL: 21% (vs. 20% nationally)
  - DM: 27% (vs. 30% nationally)
  - FFC: 15% (vs. 14% nationally)
- Segments exhibit similar characteristics and values as those found in national segmentation
- Overall, key national insights apply to urban groups

# Suburban Canadians

- Overall, the results of our national segmentation apply to suburban Canadians
- But, suburban Canadians (n=1,464) are distributed a bit differently among the segments:
  - PA: 22% (vs. 15% nationally)
  - CN: 19% (vs. 21% nationally)
  - CL: 30% (vs. 20% nationally)
  - DM: 20% (vs. 30% nationally)
  - FFC: 8% (vs. 14% nationally)
- Among suburban residents, the greatest differences from national segmentation are in the CL and DM:
  - Like national segmentation, CL are more concerned about climate issues and more centrist than DM
  - Within suburbs, however, CL often express more neutral opinions than DM (for all questions used as segmentation criteria, including nativism and government interference in the economy)

# Rural Canadians

- Sub-segmentation of rural Canadians (n=937) yields complex results diverging from national segmentation
  - Conflicting signals from statistical indicators in terms of model fit
  - Unclear distinctions in some segments suggest significant potential for model improvement
  - Parsing this out would require more time to develop a new model with different segmentation criteria specific to rural Canadians (beyond the scope of current research project)
- In short, our national segmentation model is less appropriate for segmenting this more restrained, homogenous group.
- Future work could focus on unpacking sub-segments in rural Canada

# Why focus on Disengaged middle?

Because Canadians in the Disengaged middle (DM):

- Are mostly working class (a group EcoA members wanted to know about)
- Are most likely to be non-white (another priority interest of members)
- Make up the largest segment at national level (30% of population) and many vote
- Are the most difficult to describe segment (due in part to their size, and heterogeneity)
- Have *softest* opinions (most likely to be neutral on a range of both climate and political issues); and are thus most likely to change opinions and preferences

# The Disengaged middle

# Review of national findings

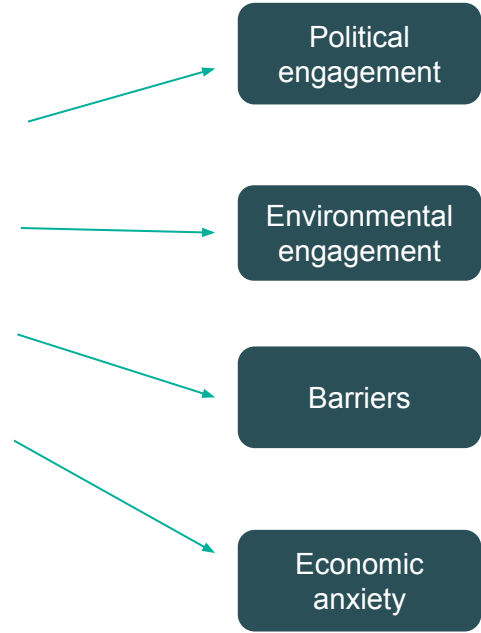


Disengaged middle 30%

Least likely to be engaged in political issues, neutral

- Most common provincially-defined segment in Atlantic Canada, Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan
- Gender-balanced, slightly younger and more likely than other segments to be non-white
- Most identify as working or middle class, have high school or technical training; more likely than other segments to have children
- Like FFC less likely to work in public sector or belong to unions; fairly religious
- Concerns: health and inflation, hate and misinformation online, conspiracy theories and artificial intelligence
- Trust (in order): friends and family, and (to a lesser extent) doctors and scientists
- Centre/centre-right, less likely than CN to have authoritarian and nativist opinions, though some do
- Only 50% would "definitely" vote if a federal election were held tomorrow, most likely for CPC (and to a much lesser extent, LPC)

# Sub-segmentation criteria





# Unpacking the Disengaged middle

Ranked by level of engagement on climate change, higher to lower



Concerned middle

48%



Civic middle

27%



Passive middle

25%

Percentages indicate  
proportion of respondents  
in each segment



Concerned middle

48%

## Environmentally engageable, but facing notable obstacles

### Characteristics:

- Mainly located in Ontario, Alberta, British-Columbia, Quebec and Atlantic provinces
- More likely to be younger, female, in lower income brackets and parent of a child under 18
- More likely to identify as BIPOC (30%); many (40%) 1st and 2nd generation Canadians
- Most likely among disengaged middle groups to engage in environmental activities; believe in human-caused climate change and have experienced climate change impacts (though still low relative to PA, CN and CL)
- Relatively active politically (52% definitely; 32% probably vote), less so than Civic middle
- Greater economic anxiety, less likely to own home (65%), which may influence their issue priorities
- More engaged than other sub-segments but face challenges including concerns around economy, hedonic gratification, efficacy and importance of action
- 1 in 5 believe strong oil and gas sector in Canada benefits them and their community (38% agree somewhat)



Civic middle

27%

## Politically engageable, but less environmentally engaged

### Characteristics:

- Gender-balanced, slightly more likely to live in Quebec
- Compared with the first segment, tend to be older, retired, with a higher probability of being grandparents than parents of children under 18
- Least likely of all disengaged middle groups to identify as BIPOC (18%)
- Tend to be in the middle class or upper middle class/upper class
- Experience minimal economic concerns, reflecting a stable financial status (78% home owner)
- Most politically active group (70% definitely vote; 20% probably), but less likely than Concerned middle to participate in environmental initiatives
- More attached to Canada (64%) and local community (54%) and more likely to strongly agree that Canada's oil and gas industry benefits them and their community (27% agree strongly; 30% agree somewhat)



Passive middle

25%

Least likely to be engaged in political and environmental issues, neutral

### Characteristics:

- Predominantly female (65%) with lower educational attainment and lowest home ownership status (55%)
- Like the Concerned middle, more likely than Civic middle to be younger, female, in lower income brackets, BIPOC, and parent of a child under 18
- Most disengaged group within the Disengaged Middle, showing minimal activity in both political and environmental spheres
- General neutrality on a variety of key issues, making it challenging to get in-depth insights into their perspectives and motivations
- Tend to be neutral (64%) on perceived importance of a strong oil and gas sector for themselves and their community

# Engagement

# How we measured engagement

## Environmental battery

**Over the past few months, which of the following have you done on a regular basis?**

- Taken alternative modes of transportation
- Posted on social media about climate change
- Donated money to environmental and/or conservation causes
- Attended a climate change demonstration or rally
- Contacted a public official demanding more action on climate change
- Made purchases with environmental benefits in mind

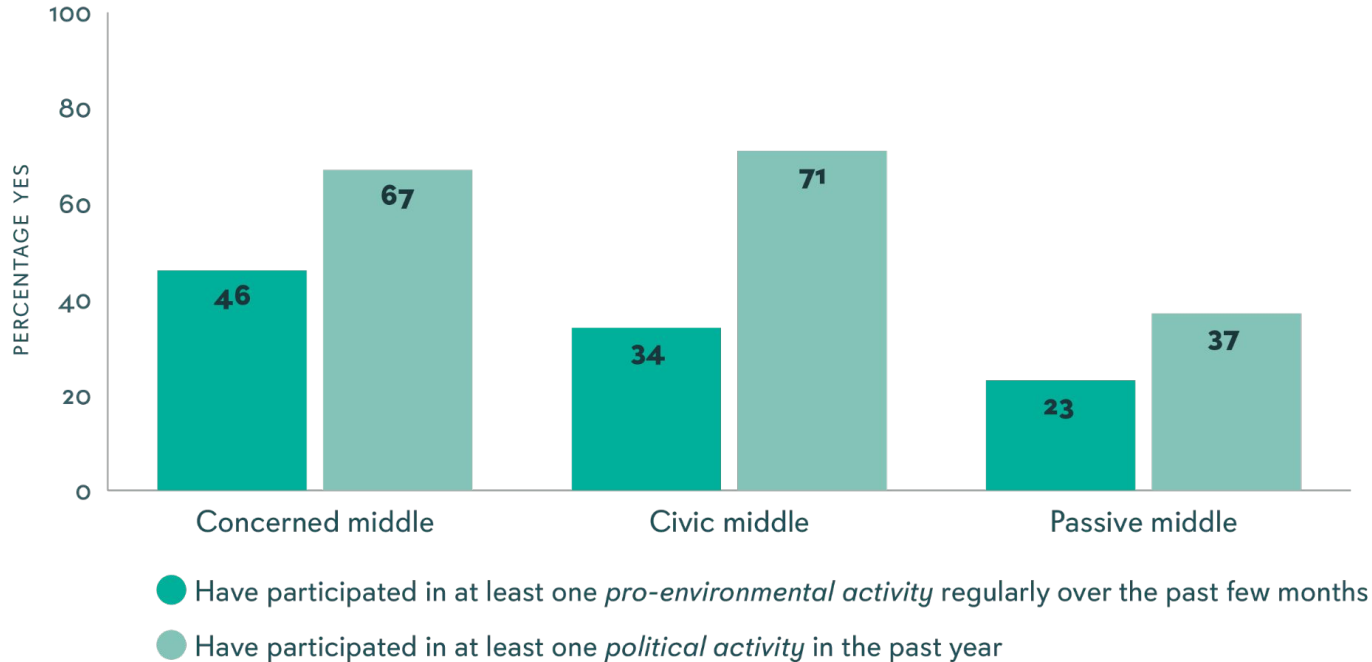
## Political battery

**Which of the following have you taken part in in the past year?**

- Attended a protest, march, or rally
- Donated to charity
- Volunteered in my local community
- Shared political content on social media
- None of the above

# Environmental vs political engagement

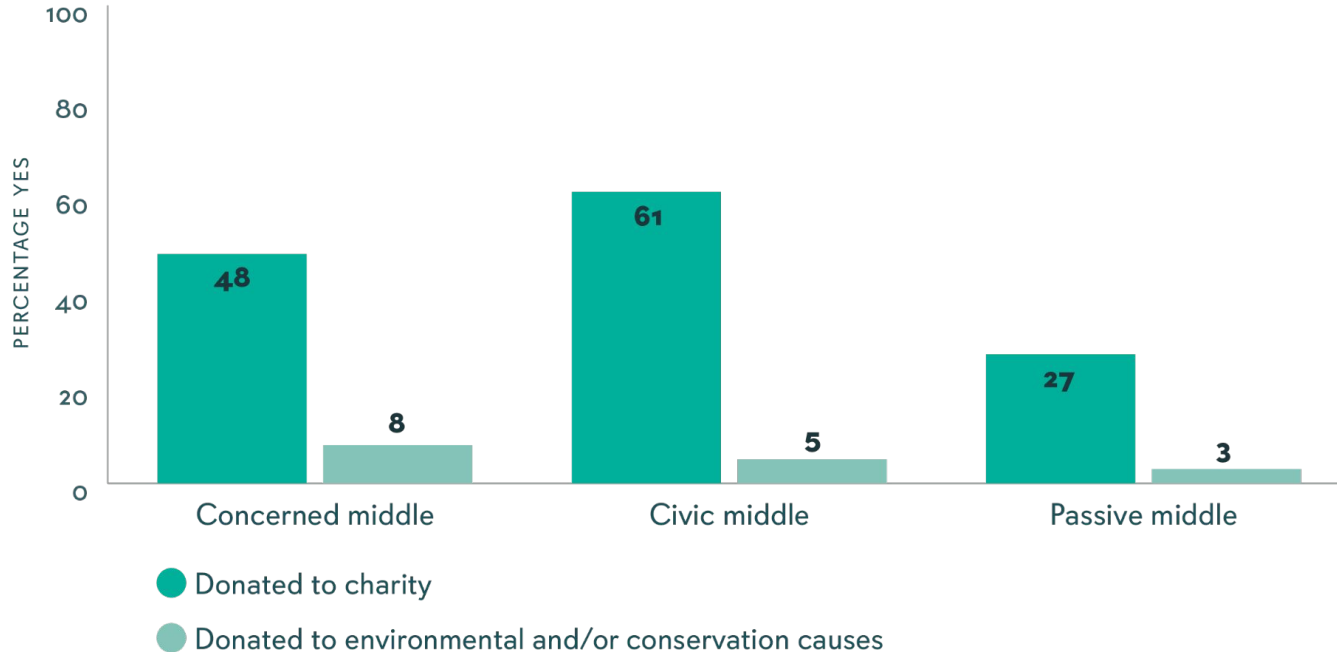
Which of the following have you taken part in over the past few months/in the past year?





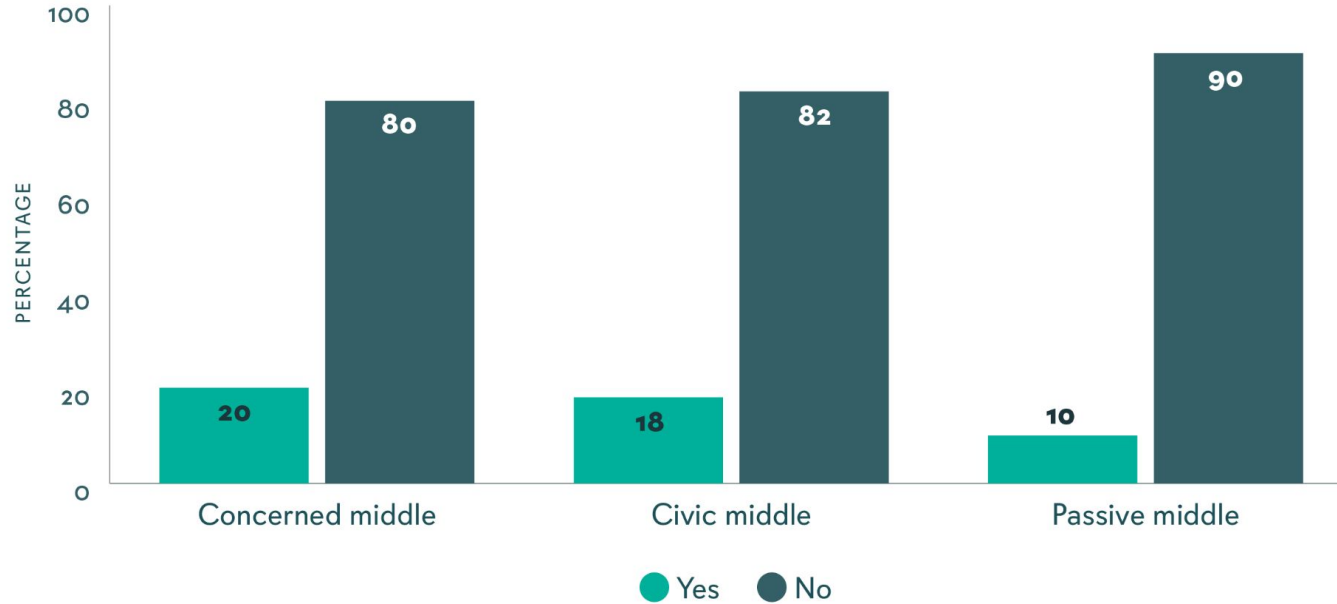
# Donation behaviour: general vs environmental

Which of the following have you taken part in over the past few months/in the past year?



# Environmental consumerism

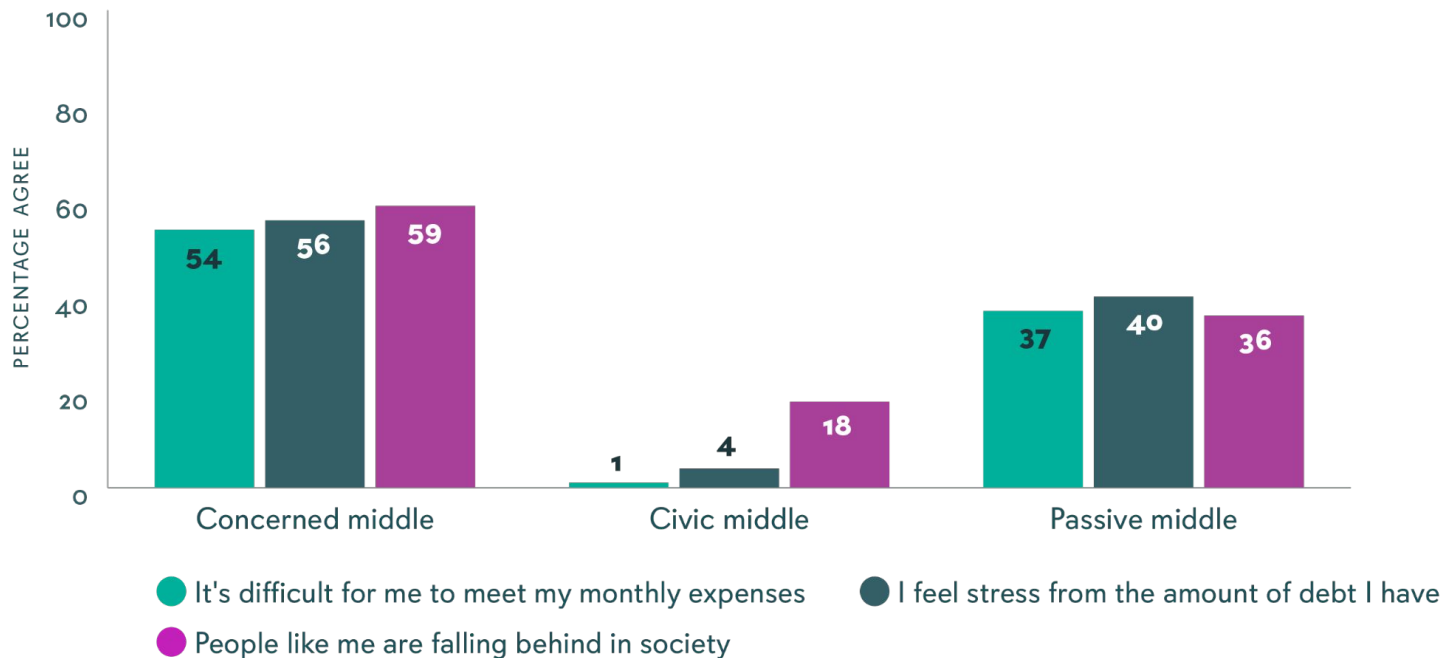
Made purchases with environmental benefits in mind regularly in over the past few months



# Barriers to engagement

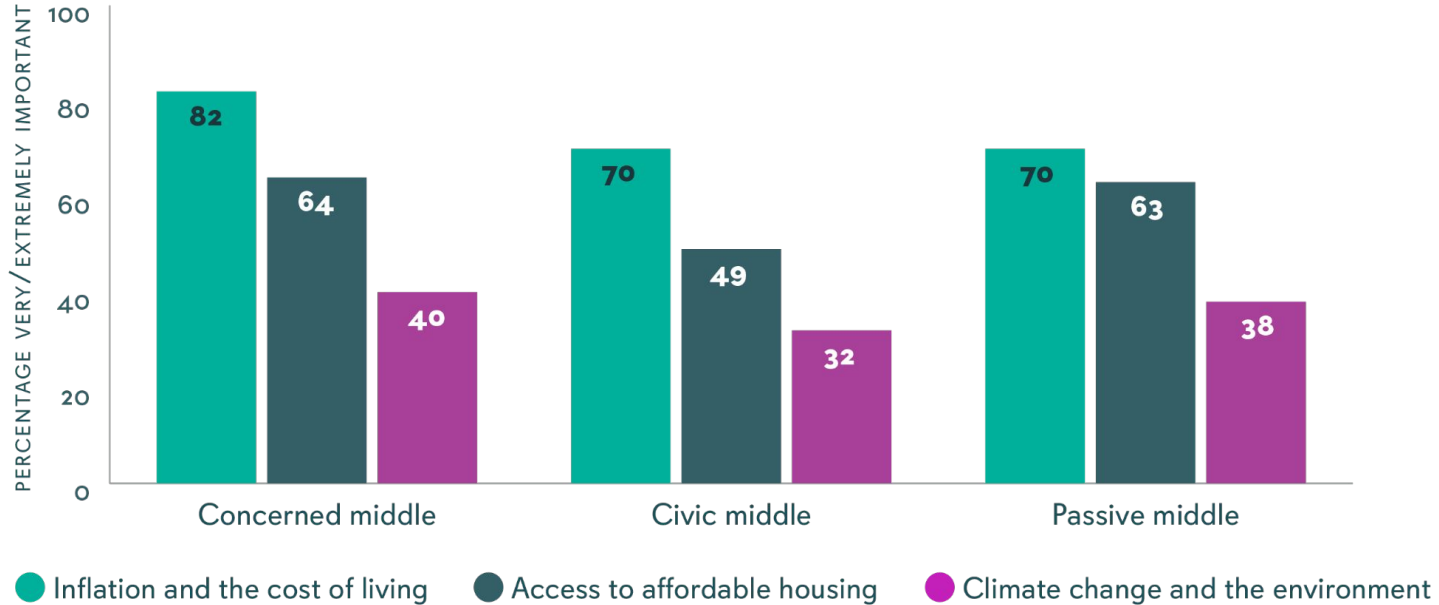
# Economic anxiety

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?



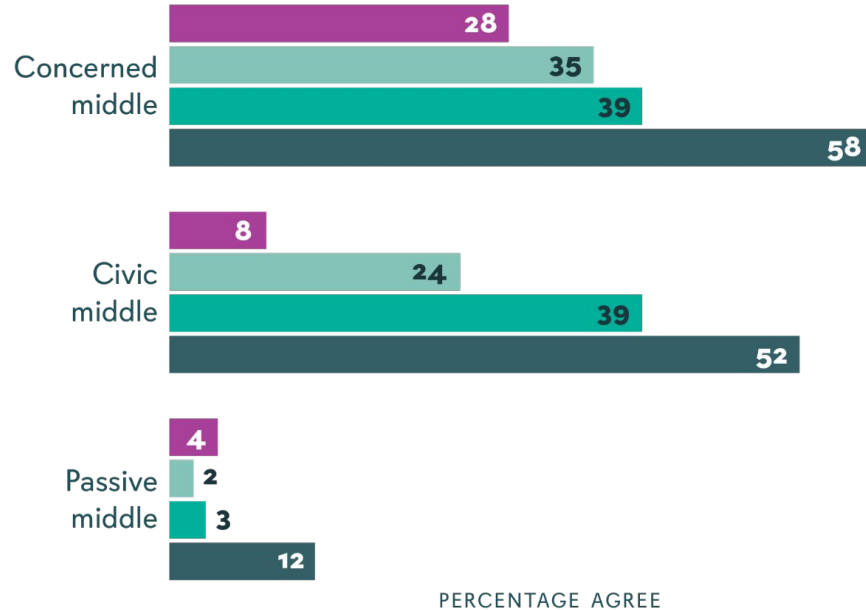
# Issue importance: affordability vs climate change

Not at all important/Extremely important:  
How important are the following issues to you personally?



# Dragons of inaction

Agree/Disagree: Thinking about your environmental impact please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following



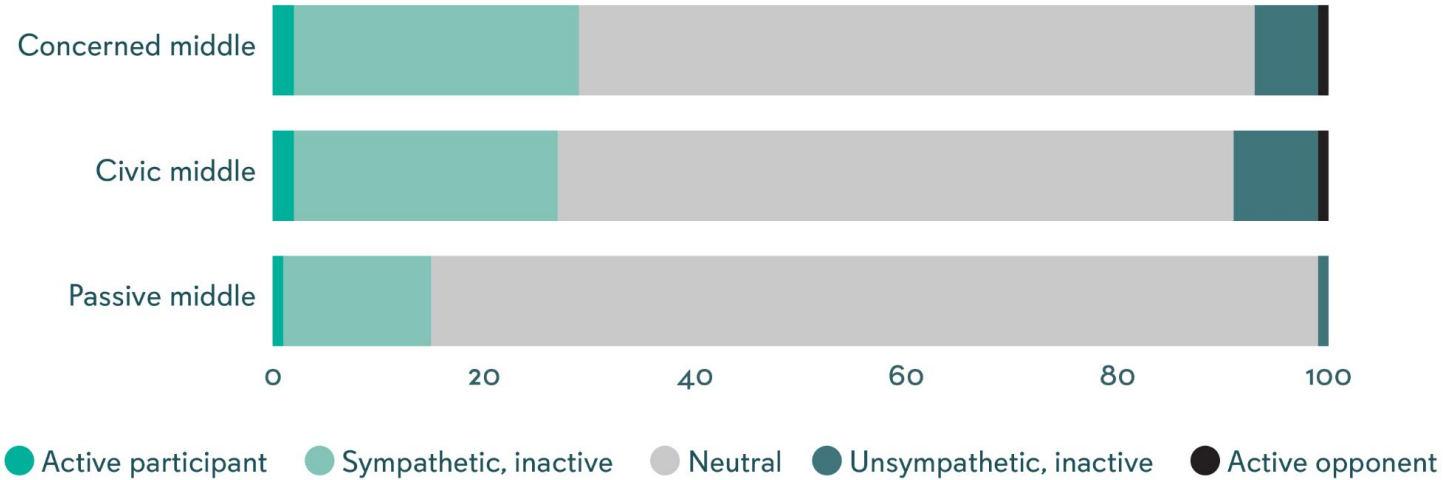
- I am concerned that lowering my environmental impact will take up too much of my time
- Technology will solve the problem of climate change
- Canada is too small a country to influence what happens
- The economy will suffer if we move away from fossil fuels

# Reaching target segments

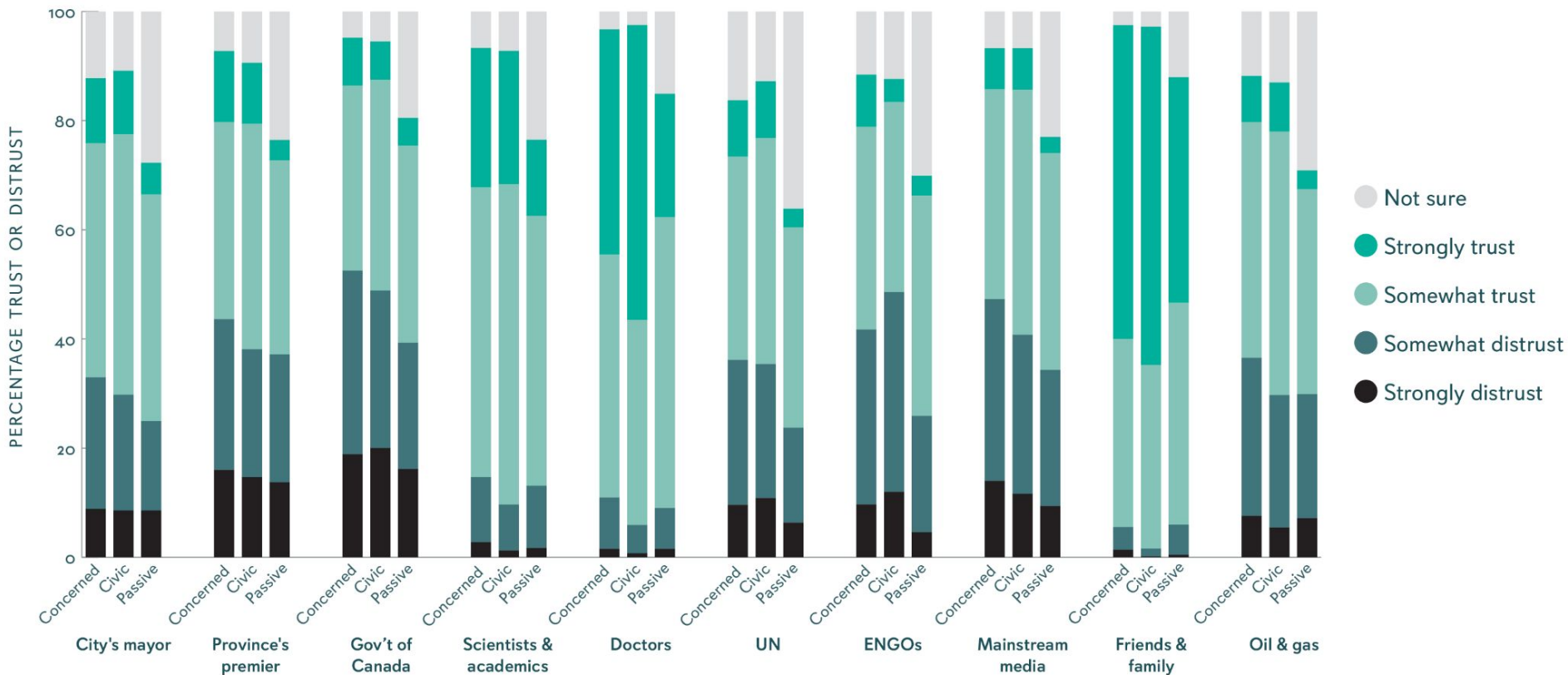


# Most reachable segments for NGOs

Thinking specifically about the environmental movement, do you think of yourself as...?

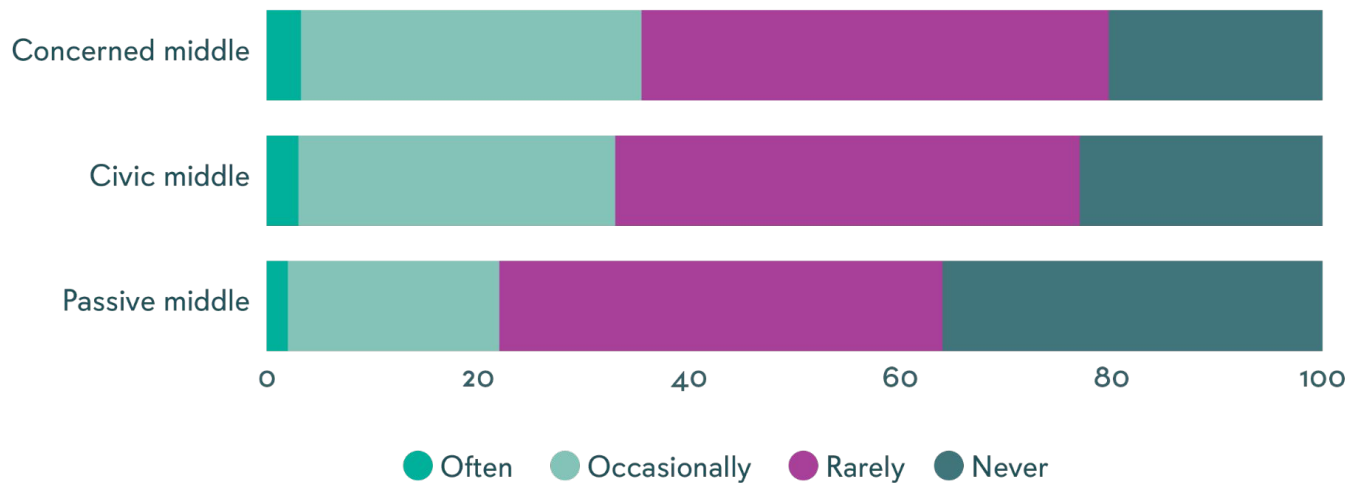


# Trusted messengers



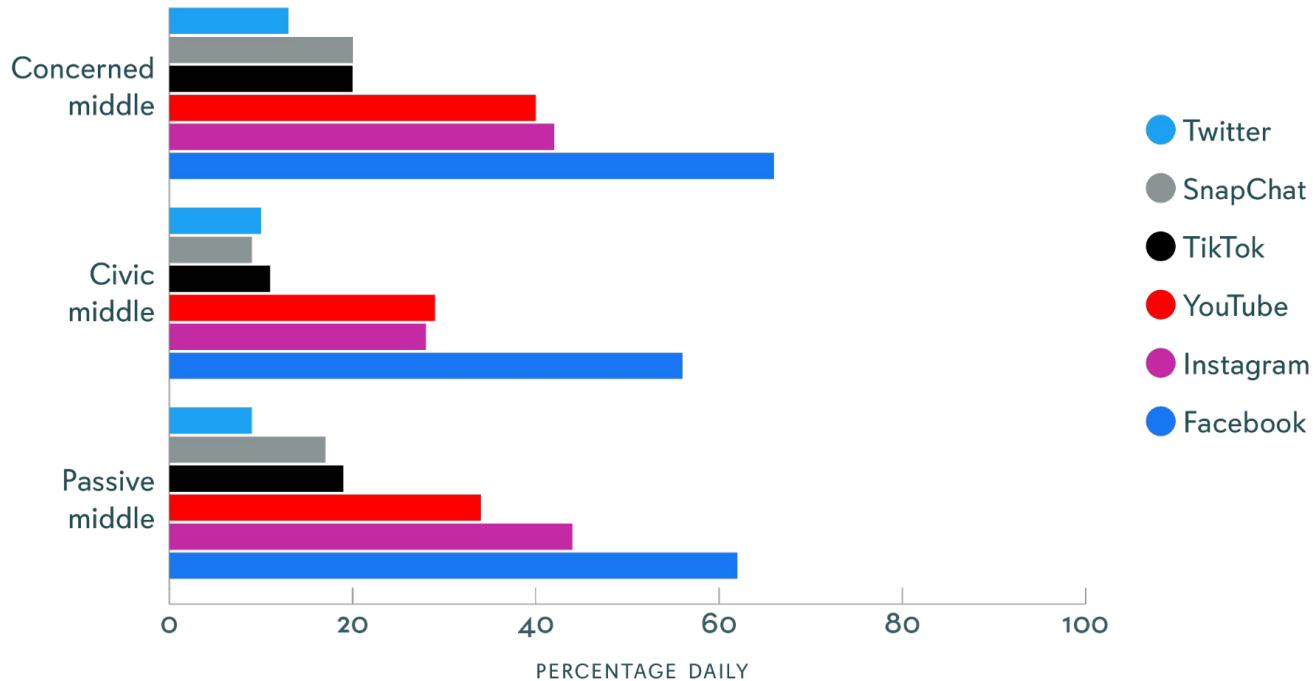
# Frequency of climate change discussion

How often do you discuss climate change with your family and friends?



# Frequency of social media use

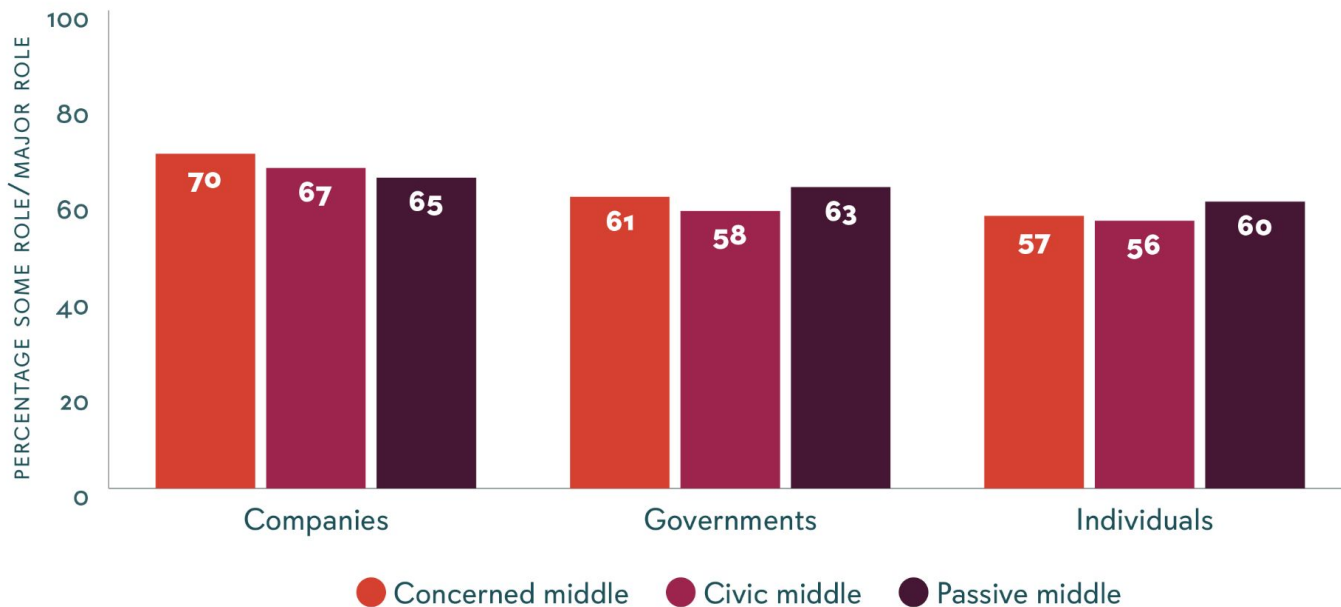
How often do you use the following social media platforms?



# Testing narratives: corporate responsibility

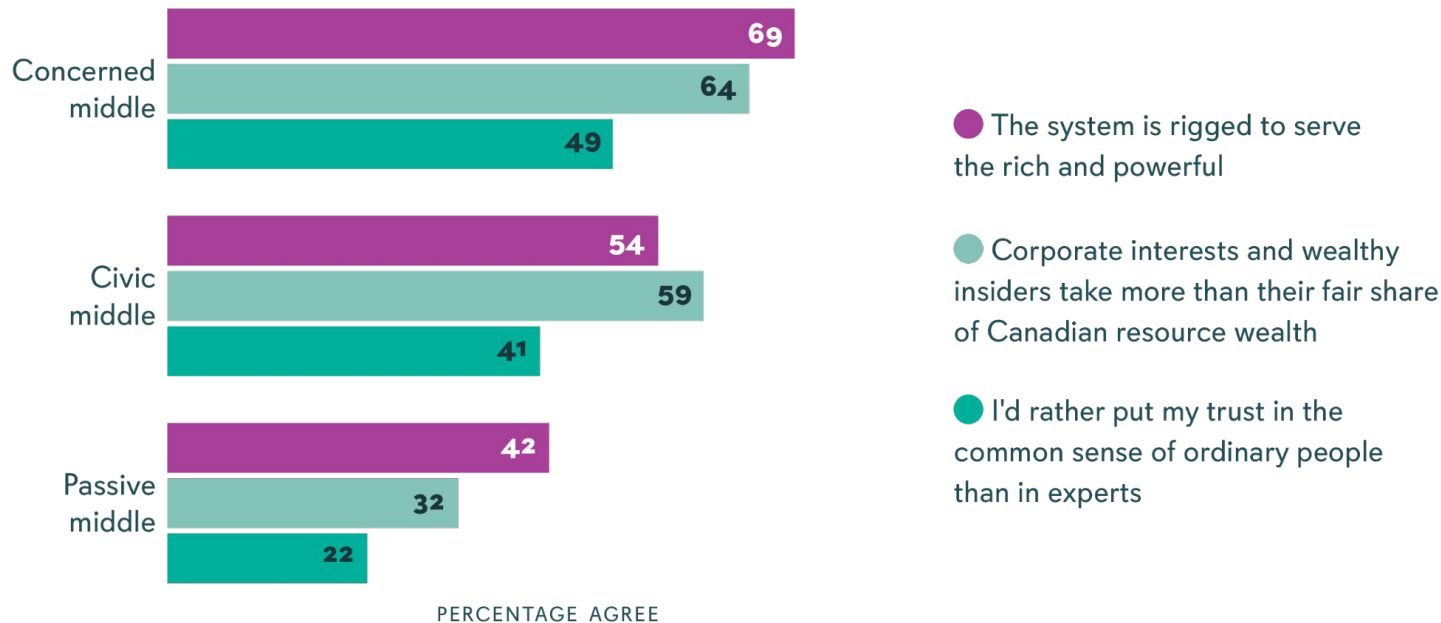
Potential for narratives highlighting how the record profits of foreign-based, profit-driven fossil fuel companies fuel both climate change and inflation, impacting millions of hard-working Canadians

How much of a role, if any, would you say each group has played in causing climate change?



# Advice for your narratives: go populist

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following?



# Engaging the Concerned middle

## Key insights:

- Typically younger, lower-income individuals, often parents of children under 18, with 30% identifying as BIPOC.
- These demographics may prove challenging to reach, but many sympathize with ENGOS
- Paradoxically most engaged on environmental behaviours while being held back by economic concerns and doubts about moving away from fossil fuels – suggests they can be move further up the ladder if concerns are addressed

## Engagement strategies:

- **Address economic anxiety:** focus on messages and policies that address economic fears, showing how environmental initiatives can reduce household energy costs while generating economic growth and jobs
- **Appeal to younger identity:** use younger messengers to communicate about challenges and opportunities facing youth; test narratives that highlight how corporate roles and record profits of foreign-based, profit-driven fossil fuel companies fuel both climate change and inflation, impacting millions of young, hard-working Canadians
- **Go populist:** test populist messages about the fight against the elite powers contributing to environmental and economic injustices. Build on the perception that the system is biased towards the established and wealthy to advocate for changes that align with this view, positioning environmental actions as steps towards a fairer society for younger generations and their children



# Engaging the Civic middle

## Key insights:

- Tend to be older, higher-income individuals, more likely to be grandparents than parents of children under 18, with stronger roots in Canada and fewer identifying as BIPOC
- These demographics are favorable to engagement via ENGOS
- Tend to be economically secure and hold moderate egalitarian values and authoritarian leanings
- More politically than environmentally engaged; fewer barriers to engagement than for Concerned middle (time and resources)

## Engagement strategies:

- **Highlight intergenerational justice:** test “later is too late” narrative and appeal to their roles as grandparents and parents, emphasizing the importance of leaving a healthy planet for future generations. Connect their egalitarian values to sustainability and fairness using messaging that focuses on legacy and stewardship
- **Frame politically:** since Civic middle tend to be politically engaged, seek to engage on broader range of political issues, illustrating the interconnections between policy and issues they care about
- **Emphasize corporate accountability and populist messaging:** while these approaches, appealing to egalitarian and authoritarian norms, should be especially impactful with Concerned middle they can also appeal to the Civic middle particularly if highlighting issues of fairness and making fossil fuel companies accountable for the harms they create

# Short segmentation battery

# What we did

**Objective:** Develop a short battery of questions for segmentation in future research & campaigns

**Methodology:**

- Test several subsets of segmentation criteria based on their contribution to the model's performance (e.g., questions with the highest R-squared and interpretative leverage)
- Assess the replication of results from the full segmentation battery across national and regional samples for each subset

**Criteria for short battery selection:**

- Ensure close substantive similarity between the five classes generated by the short battery and those from the full battery (key characteristics of groups and conditional probabilities of response patterns must align closely)
- Maintain relatively similar segment distributions between results found using the short and full batteries (within a 5%-10% range)
- Entropy R-squared (indicating classification accuracy) should be higher than 0.75 across samples

# Full battery

Q1. How concerned are you, if at all about climate change?

Q2. How much do you think climate change will harm you personally?

Q3. How much do you think climate change will harm future generations?

Q4. How much of a role would you say each group has played in causing cc? Companies that produce, transport and burn fossil fuels

Q5. Thinking specifically about the environmental movement, do you think of yourself as: An active opponent of the environmental movement/Unsympathetic towards the movement, but not active/Neutral/Sympathetic towards the movement, but not active/An active participant in the environmental movement

Q6. *Agree/Disagree*: The effects of climate change are seriously exaggerated

Q7. *Agree/Disagree*: Climate change is the primary driver of extreme weather events recently experienced in Canada and around the world

Q8. *Agree/Disagree*: I feel scared when I think about the future of the planet

Q9. *Agree/Disagree*: I feel angry about how people have treated the environment

Q10. *Agree/Disagree*: I'd rather enjoy my life than worry about my impact on climate change

Q11. *Agree/Disagree*: We have gone too far in pushing equal rights in this country

Q12. *Agree/Disagree*: The government interferes far too much in our everyday lives

Q13. *Agree/Disagree*: Corporate interests and wealthy insiders take more than their fair share of Canadian resource wealth

Q14. *Agree/Disagree*: I'd rather put my trust in the common sense of ordinary people than in experts and intellectuals

Q15. *Agree/Disagree*: The growing number of newcomers from other countries is a threat to traditional Canadian customs and values

Q16. I worry about becoming a minority in my own country

Q17. Multiculturalism has done more to divide than unite Canadians

# Short battery

Q1. How concerned are you, if at all about climate change?

Q2. How much do you think climate change will harm future generations?

Q3. Thinking specifically about the environmental movement, do you think of yourself as: An active opponent of the environmental movement/Unsympathetic towards the movement, but not active/Neutral/Sympathetic towards the movement, but not active/An active participant in the environmental movement

Q4. *Agree/Disagree*: The effects of climate change are seriously exaggerated

Q5. *Agree/Disagree*: We have gone too far in pushing equal rights in this country

Q6. *Agree/Disagree*: The government interferes far too much in our everyday lives

Q7. *Agree/Disagree* :The growing number of newcomers from other countries is a threat to traditional Canadian customs and values

# Short battery application

## Audience segmentation reminders:

- Two objectives in audience segmentation: 1) Identify subgroups with similar characteristics so as to reach them with more effective communication; 2) trace the evolution of segments across time
- Whether or not the short battery can be used to track the evolution of segments over time using the CA-MAP results as a baseline remains an open empirical question.
  - Since the segmentation criteria include values, the CA-MAP segmentation is less likely to change
  - What is the objective? Motivating action within segments vs. Move people across segments
  - If the latter is the goal, then large sample size of CA-MAP allows for return to sample later in time for the most precise measurement of shifts across segments (are people moving) using panel data, repeated measures design

## Short battery robustness and application:

- National segment comparisons between short and full batteries show remarkably similar results, with distributions varying within a 5% range
- Results also replicate well at the regional levels, but provincial distributions will vary within a 10% range in some cases depending on which battery we use
- Overall, after testing the short battery on both national and regional samples, totaling 7 samples, the short battery results appear robust for future research applications
- The full battery has higher classification accuracy (entropy R-squared  $\approx 0.90$ ) compared to the short battery (entropy R-squared  $\approx 0.80$ ), hence we recommend using the full battery when possible if the goal is to track change over time
- Further refinement of the battery could be done using machine learning techniques to evaluate its effectiveness in making accurate predictions using new, independent samples

# Questions?

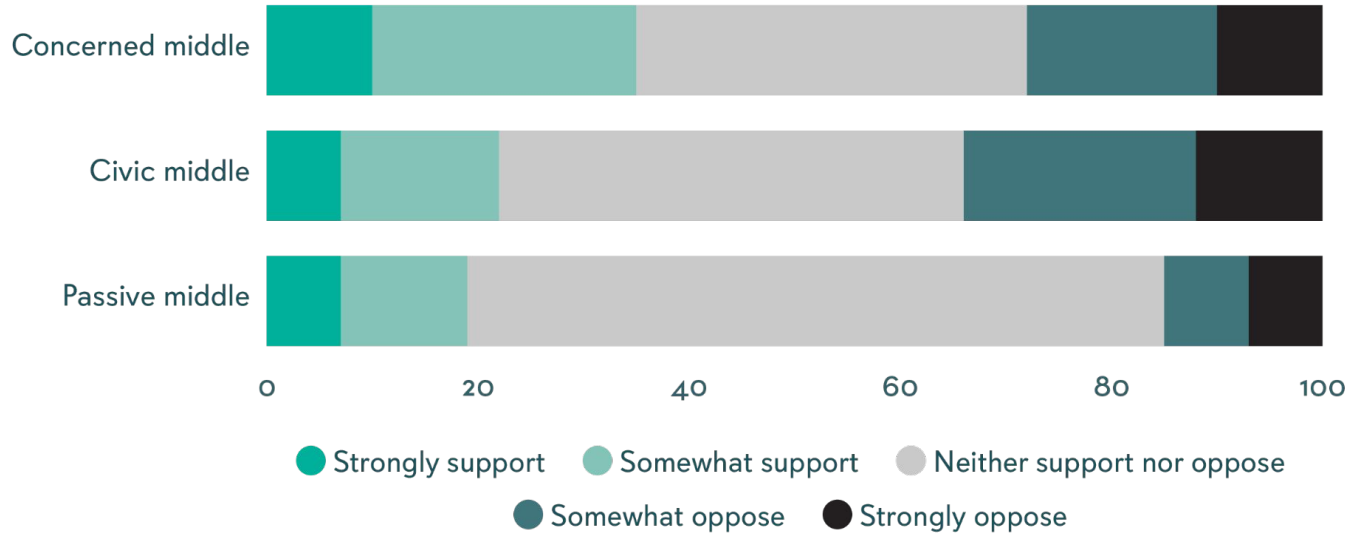


# Extra



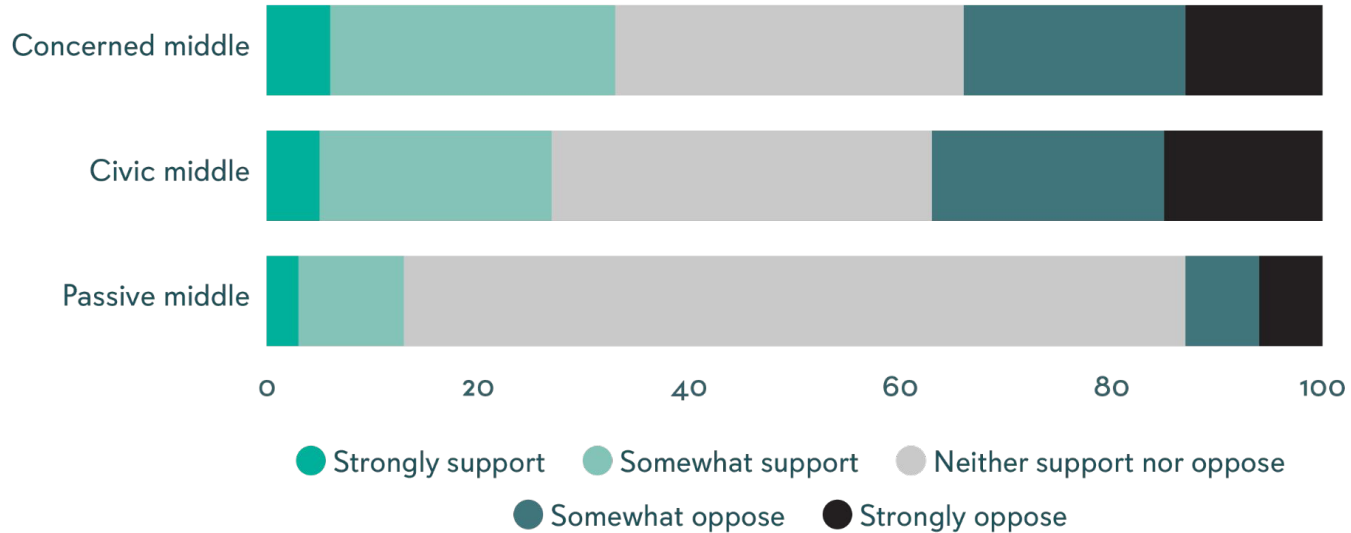
# Taxing oil and gas

Support/oppose: "Increase taxes on oil and gas companies"



# Conservation

Support/oppose: "Re-zone protected land to allow more homes and roads to be built"



# Clean energy

Thinking about how the country produces and uses energy, should Canada prioritize...

