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Continuous Qualitative Data Collection of Canadians' Views – September 2024

Executive Summary

Prepared for the Privy Council Office

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Canada 

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This public opinion research report presents the results of a series of focus groups conducted by The Strategic Counsel on behalf of the Privy Council Office. The fifth cycle of the second year of this study included a total of twelve focus groups with Canadian adults (18 years of age and older) conducted between September 4th, 2024, and September 26th, 2024.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre : Rapport final - Collecte continue de données qualitatives sur les opinions des Canadiens – septembre 2024.

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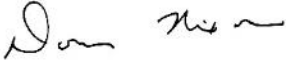
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Political Neutrality Certification

I hereby certify as a Senior Officer of The Strategic Counsel that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Policy on Communications and Federal Identity and the Directive on the Management of Communications – Appendix C – Mandatory Procedures for Public Opinion Research.

Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.

Signed:  _____

Date: October 23, 2024

Donna Nixon, Partner
The Strategic Counsel

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Communications and Consultation Secretariat of the Privy Council Office (PCO) commissioned The Strategic Counsel (TSC) to conduct continuous cycles of focus group research across the country with members of the public on key national issues, events, and policy initiatives related to the Government of Canada.

The broad purpose of this ongoing qualitative research program is three-fold: to explore the dimensions and drivers of public opinion on the most important issues facing the country; to assess perceptions and expectations of the federal government's actions and priorities; and, to inform the development of Government of Canada communications so that they continue to be aligned with the perspectives and information needs of Canadians, while remaining both clear and easy-to-understand.

The research is intended to be used by the Communications and Consultation Secretariat within PCO in order to fulfill its mandate of supporting the Prime Minister's Office in coordinating government communications. Specifically, the research will ensure that PCO has an ongoing understanding of Canadians' opinions on macro-level issues of interest to the Government of Canada, as well as emerging trends.

This report includes findings from twelve online focus groups which were conducted between September 4th, 2024, and September 26th, 2024, in multiple locations across the country. Details concerning the locations, recruitment, and composition of the groups are provided in the section below.

The research for this cycle focused largely on the services and benefits provided to Canadians, actions taken by the Government of Canada related to capping oil and gas emissions, housing, health care, and messaging related to clean electricity and the fight against climate change. A number of groups also shared their perspectives related to a video advertisement that had been developed by the federal government related to the Canada Child Benefit (CCB).

Participants also discussed what they had seen, read, or heard about the Government as of late, as well as their impressions regarding the federal government's management of the economy, interest rates, and the cost of living. Other topics focused on during this cycle included immigration, firearms, cyberbullying, issues impacting Arab Canadians, and the design of the EnerGuide home energy label. Some groups also shared their opinions related to a video concept that had been developed by the federal government related to the actions it was taking to combat climate change. Individuals residing in Alberta also provided their outlook regarding the energy sector in their province as well as across Canada more broadly.

As a note of caution when interpreting the results from this study, findings of qualitative research are directional in nature only and cannot be attributed quantitatively to the overall population under study with any degree of confidence.

Methodology

Overview of Groups

Target audience

- Canadian residents, 18 and older.
- Groups were split primarily by location. Some groups focused on specific cohorts of the population, including parents of children in daycare/seeking daycare, those with low-to-moderate incomes, Arab Canadians, and individuals concerned about crime.

Detailed Approach

- Twelve groups were conducted across various regions in Canada.
- Six groups were conducted among the general population residing in Newfoundland and Labrador, the Greater Vancouver Area, Alberta, Northern Canada, the Niagara region of Ontario, and the Laval region of Quebec.
- The other six groups were conducted among key subgroups including:
 - Parents of children in daycare/seeking daycare in Eastern Ontario;
 - Low-to-moderate income individuals in Quebec, Atlantic Canada, and Western Canada;
 - Arab Canadians residing in major centres in Quebec; and
 - Individuals concerned about crime in the Greater Toronto Area.
- The three groups based in Quebec were conducted in French. All other groups were conducted in English.
- All groups for this cycle were conducted online.
- A total of 8 participants were recruited for each group, assuming 6 to 8 participants would attend.
- Across all locations, 90 participants attended, in total. Details on attendance numbers by group can be found below.
- Each participant received an honorarium of \$125.

Group Locations and Composition

LOCATION	GROUP	LANGUAGE	DATE	TIME (EDT)	GROUP COMPOSITION	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Newfoundland and Labrador	1	EN	Wed, Sep 4 th	4:30-6:30 PM	General Population	8
Greater Vancouver Area	2	EN	Thurs, Sep 5 th	9:00-11:00 PM	General Population	8
Eastern Ontario	3	EN	Tues, Sep 10 th	6:00-8:00 PM	Parents of Children in Daycare/Seeking Daycare	6
Alberta	4	EN	Wed, Sep 11 th	8:00-10:00 PM	General Population	8
Quebec	5	FR	Thurs, Sep 12 th	6:00-8:00 PM	Low-to-Moderate Income	8
Northern Canada	6	EN	Tues, Sep 17 th	8:00-10:00 PM	General Population	8
Atlantic Canada	7	EN	Wed, Sep 18 th	5:00-7:00 PM	Low-to-Moderate Income	6
Major City Centres Quebec	8	FR	Thurs, Sep 19 th	6:00-8:00 PM	Arab Canadians	8
Western Canada	9	EN	Mon, Sep 23 rd	8:00-10:00 PM	Low-to-Moderate Income	7
Greater Toronto Area	10	EN	Tues, Sep 24 th	6:00-8:00 PM	Concerned about Crime	8
Niagara Region Ontario	11	FR	Wed, Sep 25 th	6:00-8:00 PM	General Population	7
Laval Region Quebec	12	EN	Thurs, Sep 26 th	6:00-8:00 PM	General Population	8
Total number of participants						90

Key Findings

Government of Canada in the News (All Locations)

All groups were asked to share what they had seen, read, or heard about the Government of Canada in recent days. A wide range of announcements and initiatives were recalled, including the decision by the Bank of Canada to lower its policy interest rate to 4.25 per cent, the announcement by the federal government that Old Age Security (OAS) benefits would be increasing by 1.3 per cent, and an announcement by Statistics Canada that the national unemployment rate in Canada had risen to 6.6 per cent. Participants also recalled hearing about an announcement by the Government of Canada that it would be introducing a 100 per cent surtax on all Chinese-made electric vehicles (EVs), an announcement by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) that it would be setting an intake cap on international student study permit applications for 2024 and 2025, and the announcement by the New Democratic Party (NDP) that it would be ending its Supply and Confidence agreement with the Liberal Party of Canada, effective September 4th, 2024.

Participants also recalled activities related to the Government of Canada on the international stage. These included the announcement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs that the federal government would be suspending 30 permits related to the sale and exportation of arms and munitions to Israel, the attendance of the Prime Minister and other federal officials at the United Nations (U.N.) Summit of the Future, and the reaffirmation by the Government of Canada of its ongoing solidarity with Ukraine in its defence efforts to repel the Russian invasion of its territory.

Interest Rates and the Economy (Newfoundland and Labrador, Greater Vancouver Area, Alberta, Quebec Low-to-Moderate Income, Atlantic Canada Low-to-Moderate Income, Western Canada Low-to-Moderate Income, Laval Region Quebec)

Participants in seven groups engaged in an extended conversation related to issues such as interest rates, the economic growth rate, unemployment, and the Canadian economy as a whole.

Asked whether they had seen, read, or heard anything recently about the Bank of Canada cutting interest rates, a number recalled hearing that the Bank of Canada had made a series of reductions to its policy interest rate over the course of 2024, with the most recent of these having occurred on September 4th, 2024. Most reacted positively to these actions by the Bank of Canada, believing that lower interest rates would lead to more affordable mortgages for many homeowners, as well as make it easier for prospective first-time home buyers to qualify for higher mortgage amounts. Discussing what impact, if any, these actions would have on their own situations, many of those who were expecting to renew their mortgages in the near future believed that their financial situation would improve as a result of lower interest rates.

Discussing whether they had heard anything about the rate of inflation, including reports that inflation had been easing in recent months, only a small number indicated that they had. Among those who had heard something, while few were aware of any specific details, a number were of the impression that the rate of inflation had been gradually decreasing over the past year and was now somewhere between 2 and 4 per cent. While all reacted positively to the prospect of lower inflation, very few reported having observed any evidence of this in their own lives. Many felt that the cost of living had remained exceedingly high in their areas, and that the prices of essentials such as groceries, housing, and gasoline had continued to be difficult to afford.

Questioned whether they had heard anything about Canada's economic growth rate, very few indicated that they had. Informed that the annualized rate of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the Canadian economy was 2.1% per cent for the most recent quarter of 2024 and well above the Bank of Canada's estimate, while a number viewed this as a positive development, few believed that a higher economic growth rate would have a tangible impact on the daily lives of most Canadians. The view was expressed by several that while the Canadian economy may be doing better collectively, a large number of households were continuing to face financial challenges, with many taking on increasing levels of debt in order to continue to make ends meet financially.

Participants in Alberta, the Laval region of Quebec, and those in the groups comprised of low-to-moderate income individuals (based in Quebec, Atlantic Canada, and Western Canada respectively) were asked an additional question related to the current rate of unemployment. Participants were informed that the unemployment rate was currently 6.6 per cent, compared to 5.4 per cent in 2023, and 5.7 per cent in 2019 before the pandemic. Many felt that this number was quite high and reflected the challenges that they, or others they knew, had recently faced in trying to find work. A large number were of the opinion that there was currently a disconnect between employers and prospective workers, with several of the impression that while there were many jobs available in their respective regions, few of these offered a living wage and/or sufficient benefits.

Temporary Foreign Worker Program (Newfoundland and Labrador, Greater Vancouver Area, Alberta, Quebec Low-to-Moderate Income, Laval Region Quebec)

Five groups were asked an additional question related to Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) program. Asked whether they had recently seen, read, or heard anything about immigration and/or changes to the TFW program in Canada, a number recalled hearing that adjustments had been made to the TFW program, further restricting the number of immigrants that would be allowed into Canada as TFWs, as well as the types of work that TFWs would be permitted to engage in. A number reacted positively to this action, believing that higher rates of immigration in recent years (thought to include a significant number of TFWs) had placed an increasing amount of strain on key areas such as housing, health care, education, and child care. Some also felt that these changes could benefit them and lead to a greater number of employment opportunities for younger Canadians who were currently struggling to find work.

Government of Canada Priorities and Performance (Major Centres Quebec Arab Canadians)

The group comprised of Arab Canadians residing in major centres in Quebec took part in a conversation related to issues currently facing Canadians as well as their perspectives regarding the Government of Canada's management of these priorities.

Asked to identify areas in which they felt the federal government was currently performing well, a number believed that it had been effective in communicating information to Canadians related to important issues and initiatives. Other areas mentioned by participants included actions taken by the Government of Canada to resolve a backlog of passport applications following the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as investments it had made towards the building of more homes in Canadian communities through programs such as the Housing Accelerator Fund.

Discussing areas in which they felt the federal government had room for improvement, participants mentioned areas such as health care and a perceived shortage of family doctors, the need for additional affordable child care spaces and early childhood education (ECE) workers, a lack of affordable housing in Canadian communities, and immigration.

Prompted to share their opinions regarding the Government of Canada's management of international affairs and its response to international issues, most viewed it as being on the wrong track. Among these participants, the view was expressed that the Government of Canada was currently too involved in conflicts happening around the world and that a greater focus needed to be placed on addressing the issues that were facing Canadians living in Canada.

Describing the most important issues currently impacting the Arab Canadian community, many felt that more needed to be done by the federal government to increase the awareness and understanding of Arab cultures and histories among other Canadians. It was thought by a number that Arab Canadians currently faced stigma in many parts of the country, and that greater education about Arab cultures as well as the increased inclusion of Arab educators at all levels of the education system would assist in dispelling this. Asked whether they felt the Government of Canada was currently on the right track on this front, most felt that it was, believing that it had taken numerous actions to champion diversity and multiculturalism in Canada as well as to recognize and celebrate traditional Arabic holidays.

Health Care (Northern Canada)

Participants residing in Northern Canada took part in a conversation related to the provision of health care services in their communities. Asked how they would describe the health care system in Canada at present, while most viewed Canadian health care professionals (such as doctors and nurses) as generally being well-trained and highly skilled, many felt that it had become increasingly difficult to access health services. It was thought by several that this was a particular issue in Canada's North, and especially for those living in more remote areas where doctors and nurses travelled in and out of communities rather than residing in them. Several, including those in larger centres such as Yellowknife, Whitehorse, and Iqaluit, recalled having waited many months (and in some instances years) for appointments and procedures with specialists, and a number felt that even routine processes such as getting bloodwork done could take several weeks to process.

Asked whether their experiences in accessing health care services had changed in recent years, several believed that the health care system had worsened as of late. It was felt that many Northern communities were currently experiencing pronounced health worker shortages. The view was expressed that while the population in the North had been rising in recent years, the capacity of the health care system had not increased in kind to meet the new demands being placed on it.

Discussing what changes would need to be made in order to improve the health care system in their area, a large number thought that a greater focus needed to be placed on improving the conditions for health workers, including reducing the hours they work and increasing compensation. It was felt that greater efforts needed to be taken specifically related to incentivizing health workers to work in and reside in Northern communities. Several also thought that more should be done to address issues related to mental health and substance use, with many believing that these had become growing concerns in their communities as of late.

Housing (Northern Canada)

Participants residing in Northern Canada took part in a conversation related to the current housing situation in their communities. Asked how they would describe the housing situation in their area, almost all viewed it as being quite challenging. Many reported having personally faced difficulties in securing safe and affordable housing in their respective communities. Several believed that the supply of housing in many parts of the North was quite limited and were of the impression that the housing that was available had become quite expensive and unaffordable for many.

Asked whether they felt the housing situation in their area had improved, worsened, or stayed the same over the last few years, all felt that it had gotten worse. Many were of the impression that while the population in their communities/regions had been increasing in recent years, not enough new housing was being built to accommodate these new arrivals. Discussing what would need to happen for the housing situation in Northern Canada to improve, a number felt that more needed to be done to encourage municipalities to reduce red tape related to renovations and the construction of new homes and increase the rate at which new homes are being built. It was also felt that there should be greater efforts at all levels of government to reach out to the various Indigenous groups and organizations in the North to find ways to work together to build more housing in the region.

Questioned whether they had seen, read, or heard anything about actions from the Government of Canada related to housing in the North, while several believed it had committed to making investments

towards the building of more homes in the region, few could recall any details. Some recalled hearing that the federal government had recently taken actions to provide greater assistance to first-time home buyers and had also placed an increased focus on encouraging the building of prefabricated homes in Canadian communities. While most felt that these actions represented a step in the right direction, a number expressed skepticism as to whether they would be effective in making housing more affordable in their communities.

Benefits and Services for Canadians (Newfoundland and Labrador, Greater Vancouver Area, Eastern Ontario Parents of Children in Day Care)

Three groups took part in discussions related to the wide range of benefits and supports provided by the Government of Canada. Discussing their awareness of the various benefits and services provided by the federal government, participants mentioned a wide range of programs. Awareness among participants was generally highest for programs such as the Canada Child Benefit (CCB), Employment Insurance (EI), the goods and services tax/harmonized sales tax (GST/HST) credit, and senior-focused programs such as the CPP and OAS. Several also recalled recent actions that had been taken by the Government of Canada to make child care more affordable, including agreements it had reached with the provinces/territories aimed at reducing the cost of child care to \$10 per day (on average), per child.

While most felt that they were generally aware of how to access federal benefits and programs, several expressed the opinion that this could often be a time consuming and/or complicated process. Describing their experiences of accessing Government of Canada services online, while several felt that improvements had been made on this front in recent years (and particularly for the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and Service Canada websites), it was thought that additional efforts could be made to increase the user-friendliness of the websites operated by the federal government. A number also expressed having faced considerable difficulties in using telephone-based services operated by the Government of Canada, with some specifically mentioning the long-wait times they had encountered to speak with a representative regarding questions or issues they had.

Asked whether, overall, they felt that the quality of the various benefits and programs offered by the Government of Canada had improved, worsened, or stayed the same over time, most felt that they had remained mostly the same, with a smaller number believing that they had either improved or worsened. For those who felt that federal benefits and programs had improved in recent years, a number described what they perceived as the easier application process for many of these supports, as most applications could now be completed online rather than in-person or through the mail. Among the few who felt that the benefits and services offered by Government of Canada had worsened, the view was expressed that while there was a wide variety of programs available for Canadians, these had been experiencing increasing demand in recent years and were becoming more difficult to access. Among the larger number who were more mixed in their opinions or felt the benefits and services offered by the federal government had remained mostly the same, it was believed that while there continued to be many supports available to Canadians, there had been little progress in making improvements to these initiatives in recent years. Some were of the opinion that the eligibility for these programs had become too restrictive and that some criteria (such as income thresholds) needed to be revised to account for recent increases to the cost of living.

Discussing the positive ways in which the benefits and supports offered by the federal government had impacted their own lives, as well as the lives of their family, friends, and Canadians more generally, many

spoke positively of the CCB. It was felt that this initiative had made it easier for parents with young children to make ends meet and that it had provided many Canadian households with increased financial flexibility, especially amidst the rising cost of living in recent years. Some also mentioned actions that had been taken to make child care more affordable, believing this had made it much easier for many parents (and mothers especially) to return to the workforce.

Focusing on ways by which federal programs and benefits could be improved, a number believed that the income thresholds for these programs should be revised in order to allow more Canadians to qualify for them. Related to this, the view was expressed that a greater focus needed to be placed on introducing supports specifically benefitting the middle class, who were believed to also be struggling with the cost of living yet were unable to access the benefits and programs currently available to lower-income individuals.

Canada Child Benefit Ad Testing (Eastern Ontario Parents of Children in Day Care, Quebec Low-to-Moderate Income, Atlantic Canada Low-to-Moderate Income, Western Canada Low-to-Moderate Income)

Four groups shared their perspectives related to a video advertisement produced by the Government of Canada related to the Canada Child Benefit (CCB). Participants were shown the advertisement twice, in succession, and were informed that the advertisement had been produced a few years ago and had appeared on television, social media, and digital platforms such as YouTube.

Asked what they felt was the main message of this ad, almost all believed that it was to encourage Canadians to file their taxes and inform them that by doing so they may qualify to receive benefits and supports such as the CCB. A number expressed feeling that this message was unintentionally expressing negative undertones, believing it to imply that Canadians would lose access to federal benefits if they did not file their taxes on time.

Participants were next presented with the original dialogue said by the narrator to convey the advertisement's message, as well as two alternative messages that could be used instead. The original dialogue was: *"Do your taxes to receive the benefits and credits you may qualify for"*, while the two alternative messages were: *"Learn more at canada.ca/every-dollar-counts"* (Statement #2), and *"Find out if you qualify at canada.ca/every-dollar-counts"* (Statement #3).

Almost all reacted positively to the two new statements and believed that both were effective in presenting the advertisement's message. Engaging in an exercise where they were asked to select which of the three messages they felt would be the most effective, a large number selected Statement #3, with many reacting positively to what they viewed as its emphasis on "finding out" what they might qualify for. A roughly similar number selected Statements #1 and #2. Among those who chose the original statement, it was felt that it was the most direct and straightforward when it came to describing what viewers would need to do in order to receive the benefits and credits they qualify for. For those who selected Statement #2, a number spoke positively regarding what they viewed as its emphasis on learning and doing their own research regarding the benefits they might be able to receive.

Immigration (Major Centres Quebec Arab Canadians)

Participants in the group comprised of Arab Canadians residing in major centres in Quebec took part in a conversation related to immigration. Asked whether they had recently seen, read, or heard any news related to immigration in Canada, a number recalled the recent decision by Immigration, Refugees, and

Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to place a cap on the number of international student study permits it would be issuing for 2024 and 2025.

Prompted to share their views on the current state of the immigration system in Canada, participants were largely negative in their opinions, using terms like “unorganized” and “stressful” to describe the system at present. Almost all had personally gone through the Canadian immigration process, with a smaller number reporting also having experience with the process of sponsoring or being sponsored by a family member. A roughly equal number reported being satisfied with their immigration experience compared to those who recalled facing challenges during this process.

Discussing whether they felt the Government of Canada was on the right or wrong track in regards to its management of the immigration system, a large number viewed it as being headed in the wrong direction. Among these participants, it was felt that a greater priority needed to be placed on ensuring that new immigrants arriving in Canada possessed the skillsets, education, and experience that would allow them to immediately make a positive contribution to the Canadian economy. It was also felt that the federal government needed to establish clearer targets related to the number of immigrants that would be brought in each year and make efforts to adhere to these targets as closely as possible.

Questioned whether they felt the Government of Canada was doing enough to support recent immigrants, most felt that it was. A small number felt differently, believing that more could be done to assist new arrivals with obtaining housing and employment in their areas, as well as ensuring they had the language and social resources they required to integrate into their new communities.

Public Sentiment (Major Centres Quebec Arab Canadians)

The group comprised of Arab Canadians residing in major centres in Quebec engaged in a brief conversation regarding their perspectives and expectations related to their lives in Canada going forward.

Asked what made them feel optimistic about their future in Canada, several mentioned what they perceived as the fairness of Canada’s laws and judicial system, as well as what they viewed as the federal government’s commitment to protecting and promoting diversity and multiculturalism in all parts of the country. Many felt that Canada was among the best countries in the world in this regard and believed that the federal government had been a prominent defender of diversity, equity, and inclusiveness within its borders.

Discussing areas that made them feel worried or concerned about their future in Canada, a number mentioned the high cost of living in many parts of the country. Some also expressed concerns regarding what they perceived as the growing divisiveness within Canadian society, as well as the potential that they might face increased discrimination if this trend continued.

Firearms (Greater Toronto Area Concerned About Crime)

Participants in one group, comprised of residents of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) who reported being concerned about crime, engaged in a discussion related to firearms. Asked what they had recently seen, read, or heard about guns in their community, many were of the impression that there had been an increasing number of shootings taking place in the GTA in recent years as well as other crimes perpetrated by individuals using firearms.

Questioned as to whether they had noticed an increase in the presence of guns and firearms-related crimes in their respective parts of the GTA, a roughly equal number felt the level of gun activity in their area had increased compared to those who believed it had mostly remained the same. Among those who felt that instances of gun-related crimes had been increasing as of late, a large number believed that financial desperation had led to a growing number of individuals (and younger people in particular) to become involved in gang activity, including committing crimes using firearms. Several also felt that there were insufficient penalties for youth who committed these crimes and believed that this had led to many individuals who had been arrested for firearms-related crimes to reoffend due to a perceived lack of consequences for their actions.

Discussing what effects, if any, the presence of guns was having on their community, a number reported no longer travelling to certain parts of the GTA that they viewed as being dangerous. A few expressed concerns that if the rate of gun-related crime continued to worsen in the GTA, a growing number of individuals may feel compelled to legally obtain a firearm as a way of protecting themselves and their families, further increasing the presence of guns in the community.

Provided with information regarding steps the federal government was taking to reduce the presence of firearms in Canadian society, while most reacted positively to these initiatives, several felt that actions such as the prohibition of over 2,000 models of assault-style firearms and the implementation of a national freeze on handguns, would not be enough to reduce gun-related crimes, believing that most of these crimes were being committed with illegally obtained weapons. Several supported the actions to increase criminal penalties for gun smuggling and trafficking and to enhance the tools law enforcement could use to investigate firearms crimes. The view was expressed that current border security measures were insufficient and that too many illegal firearms were currently entering Canada from outside of the country. Discussing the creation of a new red flag law that would enable courts to require that individuals considered a danger to themselves or others to surrender their firearms to law enforcement, while most felt that this action would be effective, a few expressed concerns that this mechanism could be misused by those seeking to falsely accuse someone of a crime.

Cyberbullying (Greater Toronto Area Concerned About Crime)

Participants in one group engaged in a discussion related to cyberbullying. Asked what they had seen, read, or heard about this issue, a number believed that cyberbullying was currently on the rise, with some who worked in the secondary-education field reporting that their students had been dealing with this issue to an increasing extent as of late. Discussing what effect, if any, they felt cyberbullying was having on society, several believed that it had led to an increase in mental illnesses, including an increase in suicide and depression rates among Canadians. The view was expressed that this issue was having a particular impact on vulnerable groups such as young people, individuals with mental health issues, and persons living with disabilities, as well as individuals (such as influencers and content creators) who maintained prominent public profiles on digital platforms.

Asked what they felt might compel individuals to engage in cyberbullying, many cited the perceived anonymity of the online environment, believing that this created a sense of personal safety for those who wanted to bully others without being personally responsible for the consequences. It was felt that interacting anonymously with others online likely allowed cyberbullies to feel more at ease in expressing the hateful thoughts and comments that they would typically refrain from sharing in an in-person interaction.

Discussing what actions they felt the Government of Canada should be taking related to addressing cyberbullying, participants provided a range of suggestions. These included increasing the age limit for social media platforms, providing greater education to young people regarding the potential harms of cyberbullying, and increasing the criminal penalties for those who engage in this behaviour.

Provided with information related to steps the Government of Canada was taking to combat cyberbullying through the *Online Harms Act*, all believed that these were the right areas for it to be focusing on. Several highlighted the online sexual exploitation of minors as being a critical concern that they felt warranted additional action from the federal government. Likewise, it was felt that cracking down on the sharing of intimate content communicated without consent, especially as a mode of revenge, was an important action for the federal government to be asking social media companies to take.

Oil and Gas Emissions Cap (Newfoundland and Labrador, Greater Vancouver Area, Eastern Ontario Parents of Children in Day Care, Alberta, Quebec Low-to-Moderate Income)

Five groups engaged in conversations related to recent steps taken by the Government of Canada to cap and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions produced by the oil and gas sector. Asked whether they felt that introducing a cap on emissions from the oil and gas sector was a priority that the federal government should be focusing on, participants expressed a range of views. Several felt that this was important action for the Government of Canada to be taking. Among these participants, it was thought that climate change represented a major concern for both present and future generations and that any action to reduce emissions was a step in the right direction.

For those who were more uncertain or neutral in their views, it was felt that while it was important to be fighting climate change, this priority needed to be balanced with ensuring the economic wellbeing of Canadians. A number expressed concern that taking action to cap and reduce emissions from the oil and gas sector could ultimately lead to negative economic repercussions for those living in oil-producing provinces such as Alberta and Newfoundland. Participants were also worried that any additional costs incurred by oil and gas companies related to their emissions would ultimately be passed on to consumers and result in increased costs for Canadians across a number of areas.

Engaging in an exercise where they were presented with a number of potential reasons for the Government of Canada to be taking action to cap and reduce oil and gas emissions, many reacted positively to the notion that oil and gas companies should be doing their fair share to help lower emissions and that no sector of the economy should be allowed unlimited pollution. The view was widely expressed that given the significant amount of emissions produced by non-renewable resources such as oil and gas, it was important for companies in this sector to be doing whatever they could to reduce pollution and invest in sustainable technology, such as carbon capture and storage. A large number also viewed asking oil and gas companies who had made record profits in recent years to reinvest some of this money in technology that would reduce oil and gas pollution and create jobs for Canadian workers as being a compelling reason for the federal government to be acting on this front. It was felt that given that these record profits had likely resulted in increased industrial activity and emissions from the oil and gas sector, it was critical for oil and gas companies to be doing their part to mitigate the environmental damage caused by their activities.

Energy Outlook (Alberta)

Participants residing in Alberta engaged in a brief conversation related to their perspectives on the future of the energy sector, both within their province as well as across Canada more broadly. Asked how important they felt the oil and gas sector was to Alberta's economy, all viewed it as being important, with several describing it as being the most important economic driver for the province. Discussing the current state of the oil and gas sector in Alberta, a large number were of the impression that it had not been performing as well in recent years. Describing the factors they felt had contributed to this perceived downturn, a number identified the federal government's implementation of a price on carbon, believing this had made it increasingly expensive for Canadians to use carbon-emitting energy sources such as oil and natural gas.

Asked how important they felt it was for the Albertan economy to diversify beyond oil and gas, almost all viewed this as being a top priority going forward. Describing why they felt this way, several identified what they perceived as a general global trend away from oil and gas and towards more renewable energy sources in recent decades and believed that this trend would likely continue going forward.

Questioned whether they were familiar with the term 'sustainable jobs', only a small number indicated that they were. Discussing whether they thought the creation of sustainable jobs in the clean energy sector would benefit the Albertan economy, most expressed uncertainty. Many felt that they required additional details regarding the types of jobs that would be created as well as what additional actions would need to be taken to build up the province's clean energy sector in order to determine whether this approach would be economically beneficial.

Home Energy Label Design (Northern Canada)

Participants residing in Northern Canada shared their perspectives related to the design of home energy labels produced for the Government of Canada's EnerGuide program. Asked whether they were familiar with home energy labels, a roughly equal number indicated that they were compared to those that were not. Among those who were aware of these labels, most were of the impression that the primary purpose of home energy labels was to provide individuals with information related to their home's energy consumption as well as the energy efficiency of their heating and cooling systems and appliances.

Asked what type of information they would want a home energy label to tell them about their homes, participants expressed a desire for information related to the historic average energy consumption of their home, their home's energy efficiency rating, the expected financial cost of their current energy use, and a breakdown of how much energy they are using to heat/cool their home compared to the energy consumed by other appliances or technology they may own. Discussing what information they would like to see specifically regarding the energy costs of their home, participants identified a range of areas. These included the cost of energy by source (especially during the winter months), the kilowatt energy usage of their home, and areas where they were gaining or losing energy efficiency.

Presented with an example of the current EnerGuide home energy label, several expressed that it was difficult to understand the information as it was presented on the label. A number felt that upon encountering the label for the first time, they would not intuitively know where to look to find the most important information. A few also found the gigajoule (GJ) metric to be confusing and believed that this information would be easier to understand if it were presented in terms of the dollar amounts that their energy use was costing them. A small number commented positively about the use of green and red on the label, believing that this provided a straightforward way for them to understand the information being presented. Asked whether they felt the information provided on this label would assist them in

determining whether to purchase or rent a home, while several believed that it would, a number reiterated the need for the data to be presented in a more intuitive way, with a greater focus on conveying how much they could expect their home's energy use to cost them each year.

Participants were next shown a number of different examples of home energy labels from other countries around the world. Discussing the different labels, many commented positively on those labels that included information related to how much they were currently paying compared to how much they could save financially by making their homes more energy efficient. A number also reacted positively to the designs that utilized a mixture of graphics and succinct text to convey home energy information.

Environment and Climate Change Messaging (Atlantic Canada Low-to-Moderate Income, Western Canada Low-to-Moderate Income, Niagara Region Ontario, Laval Region Quebec)

Four groups took part in a discussion related to climate change and clean electricity. To begin, participants were asked what the term "clean electricity" meant to them. Most believed that it referred to the use of renewable energy sources (such as solar, wind, and hydroelectricity) to generate electricity rather than fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and gas.

Participants engaged in an exercise where they were presented with a number of statements related to clean electricity and for each were asked whether they agreed, disagreed, or had no opinion about the statement. The statements shown to participants varied between groups.

On balance, participants reacted most positively to those statements that supported increased investments by the Government of Canada towards the further development of clean electricity and expanding the use of renewable energy sources across the country. Many expressed particular support for those statements that focused on the economic benefits of investing in clean energy, including the creation of more high paying jobs for Canadians. Several also supported those statements that focused on the importance of investing in clean electricity as a way of protecting the environment and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

Participants were more skeptical related to those statements that indicated that investments in clean electricity would lead to a stabilization of energy prices for consumers. It was largely felt that while a more diversified energy grid might help somewhat in lowering costs, unless action was taken by the federal government to implement stricter regulations regarding the rates that energy providers can charge to consumers there would be little progress in making energy more affordable for Canadians. A number also expressed uncertainty regarding the statements that claimed that clean energy sources would be able to fully meet the energy needs of Canadians. Among these participants, it was felt that oil and gas would continue to be widely used in the decades to come and would play a fundamental role in Canada's energy landscape for the foreseeable future.

While several supported the statements calling for the further development of renewable energy sources in their region, such as wind, solar, and hydroelectricity, a number expressed concerns about those statements that focused on nuclear energy. Among these participants, a number worried that there were too many safety concerns related to nuclear power and did not believe that this was an area that the Government of Canada should be investing in. Participants also expressed concerns regarding potential environmental issues related to technology such as EV batteries, including the mining of the raw materials required to manufacture these batteries as well as difficulties in recycling them at the end of their use.

Asked whether they would be willing to pay slightly more in the short term to lay the foundation for a lower cost clean electricity transition over the longer term. On balance, a roughly equal number of participants indicated that they would be willing to do this compared to those who were more uncertain. Among those who were in favour of paying slightly more in the short term, it was widely felt that this would be an important investment for future generations and would help considerably towards mitigating the impacts of climate change going forward. For those who were less certain about whether they would be willing to take on these additional costs, a few questioned how much 'slightly more' would be and whether Canadians would be able to take on these increased costs given the high cost of living at present.

Climate Change Advertisement Message Testing (Greater Toronto Area Concerned About Crime, Niagara Region Ontario, Laval Region Quebec)

Three groups shared their perspectives related to two potential advertisements currently being developed by the federal government to inform Canadians about the actions it was taking to address climate change. Participants were presented with scripts for these video ads and were informed that these videos could appear on digital media such as YouTube and other online platforms as well as on television.

To begin, participants were presented with a video script which was read to them twice, in succession. Sharing their initial reactions, several spoke positively of the described imagery related to the forest environment, beautiful rivers, and birds chirping. It was felt that this was an effective way of beginning the advertisement and communicating to Canadians the environment and ecosystems that the federal government was working to protect. A number also liked how the advertisement ended with information related to the Canada Climate Plan where they could go online to find out more.

Asked what they thought was the main message of this advertisement, many believed that it was primarily focused on communicating to viewers that the Government of Canada was taking action to address climate change and protect the environment, and that one of the primary ways it was doing this was by promoting the further manufacturing and use of EVs by Canadians. Several viewed EVs and EV production as the focal points of this advertisement and believed the ad was seeking to communicate that a transition to EVs and other green technology would produce both environmental and economic benefits. On balance, most viewed the ad as being optimistic in its tone and believed that it promoted a positive, more environmentally friendly future for Canadians.

Questioned as to whether this advertisement spoke to them and/or motivated them to take action, only a small number felt that it did. While most viewed climate change as an important priority, few indicated that they would be willing to take actions such as switching to an EV and thus felt that they did not really relate to this ad. Asked what could be done to make this ad more effective, several believed that a greater emphasis should be placed on renewable energy (such as solar, wind, and hydroelectricity) more generally rather than what they perceived as its current focus on EVs. It was felt that taking this action would make the video more relatable to a broader range of Canadians.

Participants residing in the GTA and the Niagara region of Ontario were presented with a second script that focused on the Canada Carbon Rebate (CCR) and the annual amounts Ontarians could expect to receive through this initiative. Several reacted positively to this concept and felt that its perceived focus on the CCR and the notion of money going back into their pockets would be widely relatable to a large number of Canadians. A number believed that the described imagery would be visually engaging and communicate the beauty of Canada's environment and the importance of protecting it. Asked what they felt was the main message of this advertisement, most believed that it was to inform Canadians that they

would be receiving CCR payments and that they could take further action to combat climate change by switching to cleaner, more environmentally friendly technology.

Questioned whether this advertisement would motivate them to take action, several indicated that they would be interested in finding out more about how to receive CCR payments and whether any action was required on their part, apart from filing their taxes. Discussing actions that could be taken to make this ad more effective, it was felt that more could be done to emphasize the financial pressures being felt by many Canadian households at present and the ways in which the CCR could assist those who were currently struggling with the cost of living.

Discussing the two scripts they had been presented with, participants were asked whether they felt either of the two ads would be effective in terms of encouraging them to visit the website to learn more information. On balance, most felt that the second ad was more effective in this regard, believing that its focus on the amounts that they could receive through the CCR and how this could help their families would encourage them to want to learn more about this initiative. It was felt by these participants that the second advertisement had connected with them on a personal level due to what they perceived as its focus on their own household situation.

MORE INFORMATION

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