POLICY BRIEF:
Canadians support concept of carbon taxes, but don't want to pay for them

Colin Craig | June 2019

Second Street.org
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Executive Summary

During the past decade there has been considerable debate in Canada over carbon taxes. While some provinces have implemented their own carbon taxes, legislation passed by the current federal government required each province to implement a carbon tax of at least $20 per tonne by April, 2019. Under the federal government's *Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act*, the national carbon tax will rise annually until reaching $50 per tonne by 2022.[1]

SecondStreet.org hired Nanos Research to conduct some public opinion research on carbon taxes in general. This policy brief examines Canadians' feelings about carbon taxes generally, as well as their personal willingness to pay.

Key highlights from the Nanos Research survey can be summarized as follows:

- A majority of Canadians support the concept of carbon taxes (57.3%) but Canadians are much less enthusiastic about paying them; the median amount respondents are willing to pay is just $100 per year.
- Canadians are roughly split between utilizing carbon taxes to reduce emissions (48.3%) versus pursuing alternative policy options (44.2%). A further 5.0% believe the government shouldn't worry about climate change.

Methodology

Nanos Research conducted an omnibus survey of 1,000 Canadians, 18 years of age or older, between May 31st and June 4th, 2019. These observations are based on an RDD dual frame (land and cell-lines) hybrid telephone and online random survey. The margin of error for this survey is ±3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Results

The following section includes the survey questions posed to Canadians, possible responses and related information. For a breakdown of the data by age, gender and geographic region, please see the appendix.

Question:
"Do you support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or oppose having to pay a carbon tax in Canada?"

Support	**37.6%**
Somewhat support	**19.7%**
Somewhat oppose	**10.9%**
Oppose	**30.1%**
Unsure	**1.7%**

Canadians from the Prairies are most likely to oppose a carbon tax (46.7% oppose, 8.9% per cent somewhat oppose), while those from Quebec (40.6% support, 26.0% somewhat support), Ontario (42.0% support, 17.5% somewhat support) and British Columbia (44.8% support, 14.3% somewhat support) are more likely to express support. Support for carbon taxes was higher among women (60.4%) than men (54.1%).

Question: *"What is the maximum level of a carbon tax that you would be willing to pay to help fight climate change over the course of a year?" [OPEN]*	
$100 or less	**47.5%**
$101-$200	**7.7%**
$201-$300	**5.4%**
Over $300	**26.2%**
Unsure	**13.1%**
Mean	**$374.42**
Median	**$100.00**

Note: *Carbon tax rebates and related tax changes vary by household and jurisdiction, and were not part of this survey.*

When it comes to how much Canadians are willing to pay for a carbon tax, as opposed to the concept generally, we find a different story.

The open-ended question above allowed respondents to indicate whatever dollar amount they would be willing to pay (rather than choosing from a series of possible responses). The lowest amount indicated was $0 (26.3% of respondents) while the highest amount indicated was $10,000 (0.2%).

If one removes those who are "unsure" about how much they are willing to pay in carbon taxes, approximately 54.7% of Canadians are only willing to pay $100 or less each year for the carbon tax. If we include those willing to pay $101-200 each year, this figure rises to 63.5%.

Relevant to this data is a 2015 briefing note produced by Environment Canada and a 2019 report on the federal carbon tax by the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO). The Environment Canada document concluded a $100 per ton carbon tax would need to be in place by 2020 to reduce emissions by 30% below 2005 levels (the government's emission target).[2] That is approximately double the tax rate currently being phased in by the federal government. The same federal briefing note concluded that a carbon tax would need to rise to between $200 and $300 per tonne by 2050 to meet emission targets.

The PBO report came to a similar conclusion; they estimated that a $102 per tonne carbon tax would be needed to meet Canada's emissions targets.[3]

However, both government reports recommend a tax that is far below what the United Nations' recommended in 2018. The UN report called for a carbon tax of between US$135-5,500 by 2030.[4]

For perspective, University of Calgary professor Jennifer Winter estimated a $50 per tonne carbon tax would cost a "typical" Canadian household anywhere from $603 in British Columbia to $1,120 in Nova Scotia.[5]

Thus, in order to meet the federal government's climate change targets, the amount Canadians would need to pay each year in carbon taxes would need to be significantly higher than what Canadians are willing to pay.

Question: *"Which of the following statements best represents your personal view?"*	
The government should use carbon taxes to help fight climate change	**48.3%**
There are better ways to fight climate change than a carbon tax	**44.2%**
The government shouldn't worry about climate change	**5.0%**
Unsure	**2.5%**

While response data from question one suggests 57.3% of Canadians support the concept of carbon taxes, the response data for the third question suggests a segment of carbon tax supporters might actually prefer an alternative approach to reduce emissions. This is evidenced by the lower response rate (48.3%) that supports carbon taxes as a means to reduce emissions when presented with this alternative choice – *"there are better ways to fight climate change than a carbon tax."*

Conclusion

While a majority of Canadians indicated they support the concept of carbon taxes, most Canadians are not willing to pay anywhere near what the government estimates is necessary to meet our emission reduction targets. Further, support for carbon taxes drops when respondents are presented with an alternative – pursuing "better ways" to fight climate change.

About the Author

Colin Craig is the President of SecondStreet.org. He has an MBA and a BA (economics) from the University of Manitoba and is the author of *The Government Wears Prada* – a book that examines how Canada can meet the needs of our nation's aging population without raising taxes.

About Nanos Research

Nanos Research is one of North America's premier market and public opinion research firms. Nanos Research offers a vertically integrated full service quantitative and qualitative research practice to attain the highest standards and the greatest control over the research process. For more information, please visit: www.nanos.co

Sources

1. Government of Canada website (Canada Revenue Agency). Accessed June 17, 2019. https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/forms-publications/publications/fcrates/fuel-charge-rates.html

2. Smith, Marie-Danielle. March 30, 2017 National Post – *Secret briefing says up to $300-per-tonne federal carbon tax by 2050 required to meet climate targets*.

3. Bagnoli, Philip, Raphaël Liberge-Simard and Chris Matier. June 13, 2019 Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer report – *Closing the Gap: Carbon pricing fort the Paris target*. Accessed June 17, 2019. https://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/web/default/files/Documents/Reports/2019/Paris_Target/Paris_Target_EN.pdf

4. Green, Kenneth P. October 31, 2018 Fraser Institute – *The Carbon taxman is coming* (column was also published by the Calgary Sun on October 31, 2018). https://www.fraserinstitute.org/article/carbon-taxman-is-coming

5. Winter, Jennifer. May 12, 2017 University of Calgary School of Public Policy – *The effect of carbon pricing on Canadian households*. Accessed June 22, 2019 https://www.policyschool.ca/effect-carbon-pricing-canadian-households/

Canadians divided on how to fight climate change

SecondStreet.org May | Summary | Report one of two

Conducted by Nanos for SecondStreet.org, June 2019
Submission 2019-1454

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SUMMARY

Almost equal numbers of Canadians support a carbon tax or say that there are better ways to fight climate change

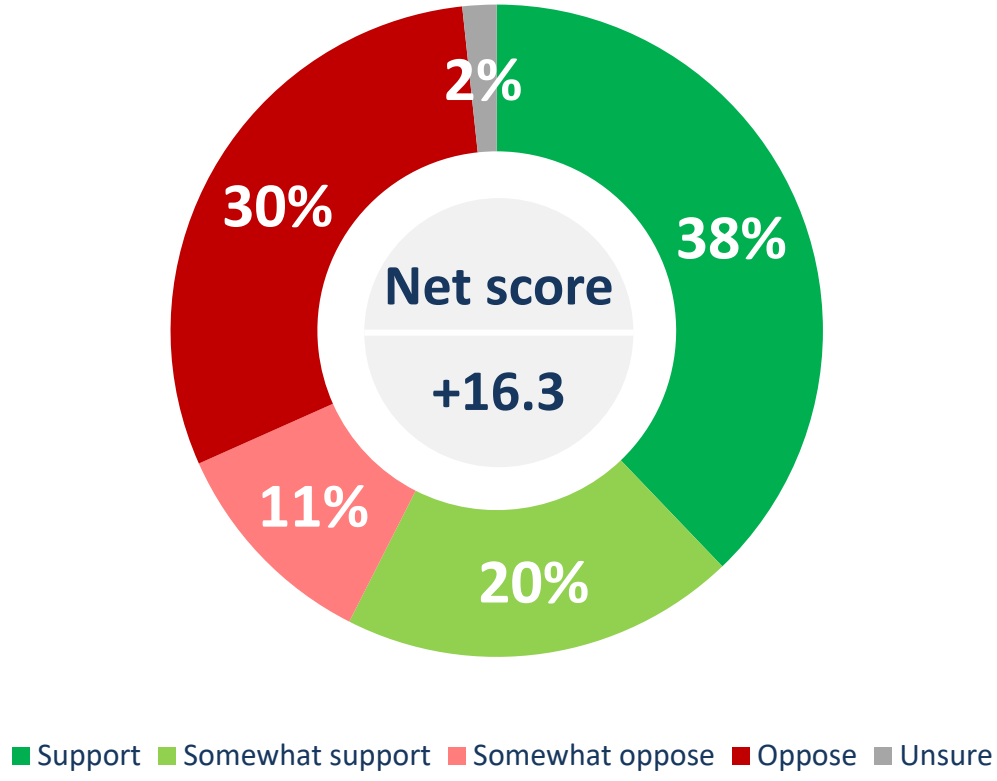
Canadians are split about the best course of action to fight climate change, with almost equal numbers saying the government should use a carbon tax to fight climate change or that there are better ways to fight climate change. Three in five Canadians support or somewhat support a carbon tax, and Canadians say they would pay $372 per year on average on the carbon tax.

- **Nearly three in five Canadians support or somewhat support having to pay a carbon tax** – Close to three fifths of Canadians say they support (38%) or somewhat support (20%) having to pay a carbon tax in Canada, while two in five say they somewhat oppose (11%) or oppose (30%) this. Two per cent are unsure. Canadians from the Prairies are more likely to oppose a Carbon tax (47% oppose, nine per cent somewhat oppose), while those from Quebec (41% support, 26% somewhat support), Ontario (42% support, 18% somewhat support) and British Columbia (45% support, 14% somewhat support) are more likely to support.
- **On average Canadians say they would pay a carbon tax of $373 per year to fight climate change** – Asked what is the maximum level of a carbon tax that they would be willing to pay to help fight climate change over the course of a year, Canadians say $373 per year on average (median of $100 per year). Canadians from British Columbia report a willingness to pay a higher average annual amount ($488), while those in the Atlantic ($305 per year) and Quebec ($310 per year) report lower ones. Younger Canadians also report being willing to pay more than older Canadians ($557 per year among those 18 to 34, $369 per year among those 34 to 54, and $251 among those 55 and older).
- **Canadians are split on how to fight climate change** – Asked which of three statements best reflected their personal view, 48 per cent of Canadians say the government should use carbon taxes to help fight climate change, while 44 per cent say there are better ways to fight climate change than a carbon tax. Fiver per cent say the government shouldn't worry about climate change and three per cent are unsure. Residents of the Prairies are more likely to say there are better ways to fight climate change (55%), while Quebecers are more likely to support the carbon tax as a means to fight climate change (59%).

These observations are based on an RDD dual frame (land- and cell-lines) hybrid telephone and online random survey of 1,000 Canadians, 18 years of age or older, between May 31st and June 4th, 2019 as part of an omnibus survey. The margin of error for this survey is ±3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

This study was commissioned by SecondStreet.org and the research was conducted by Nanos Research.

Paying carbon tax in Canada



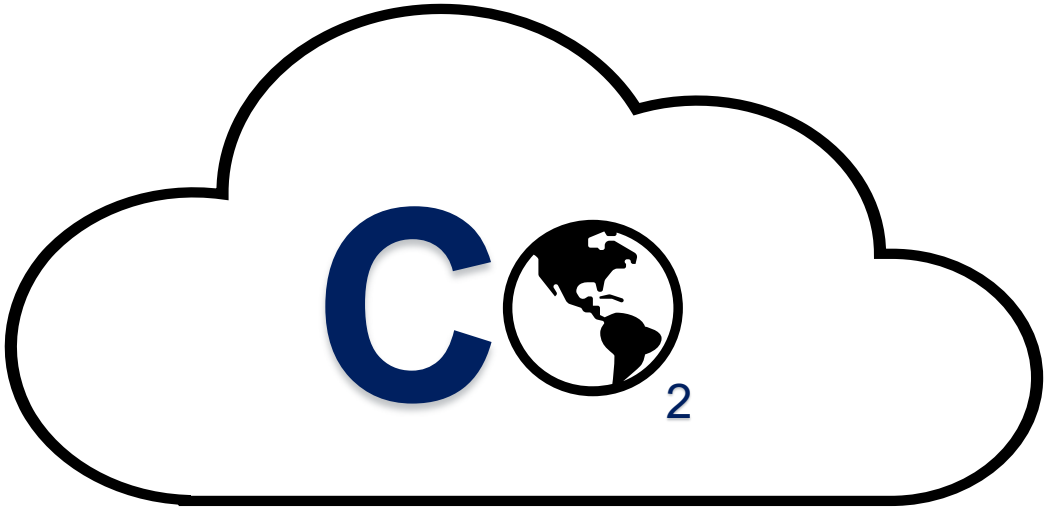
	Support/ somewhat support
Atlantic (n=100)	54.0%
Quebec (n=250)	66.6%
Ontario (n=300)	59.5%
Prairies (n=200)	42.7%
British Columbia (n=150)	59.1%
Male (n=519)	54.1%
Female (n=481)	60.4%
18 to 34 (n=263)	62.6%
35 to 54 (n=385)	54.5%
55 plus (n=352)	56.0%

*Weighted to the true population proportion.
*Charts may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

QUESTION – Do you support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or oppose having to pay a carbon tax in Canada?

Source: Nanos Research, RDD dual frame hybrid telephone and online random survey, May 31st to June 4th, 2019, n=1000, accurate 3.1 percentage points plus or minus, 19 times out of 20.

Payment on carbon tax in Canada



	Mean	Median
Atlantic (n=100)	305.1	100.0
Quebec (n=250)	310.4	100.0
Ontario (n=300)	386.0	154.0
Prairies (n=200)	387.1	50.0
British Columbia (n=150)	488.0	100.0
Male (n=519)	388.1	100.0
Female (n=481)	360.0	100.0
18 to 34 (n=263)	557.0	200.0
35 to 54 (n=385)	369.3	100.0
55 plus (n=352)	251.2	100.0

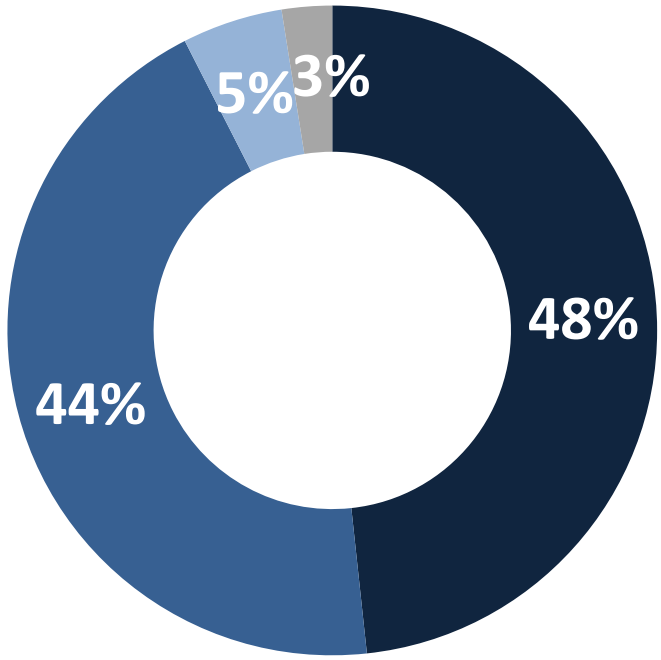
Mean: $374.4 Median: $100.0

*Weighted to the true population proportion.
*Charts may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

QUESTION – What is the maximum level of a carbon tax that you would be willing to pay to help fight climate change over the course of a year?

Source: Nanos Research, RDD dual frame hybrid telephone and online random survey, May 31st to June 4th, 2019, n=1000, accurate 3.1 percentage points plus or minus, 19 times out of 20.

Personal views on carbon tax



	Use carbon tax to fight climate change	There are better ways to fight climate change
Atlantic (n=100)	42.1%	50.2%
Quebec (n=250)	59.2%	33.7%
Ontario (n=300)	47.8%	46.5%
Prairies (n=200)	37.3%	55.4%
British Columbia (n=150)	50.3%	38.1%
Male (n=519)	44.5%	46.6%
Female (n=481)	52.0%	41.8%
18 to 34 (n=263)	54.3%	37.6%
35 to 54 (n=385)	45.2%	48.5%
55 plus (n=352)	47.0%	45.0%

***Weighted to the true population proportion.**
***Charts may not add up to 100 due to rounding.**

QUESTION – Which of the following statements best represents your personal view:[RANDOMIZE]

Source: Nanos Research, RDD dual frame hybrid telephone and online random survey, May 31st to June 4th, 2019, n=1000, accurate 3.1 percentage points plus or minus, 19 times out of 20.

METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY

Nanos conducted an RDD dual frame (land- and cell-lines) hybrid telephone and online random survey of 1,000 Canadians, 18 years of age or older, between May 31st and June 4th, 2019 as part of an omnibus survey. Participants were randomly recruited by telephone using live agents and administered a survey online. The results were statistically checked and weighted by age and gender using the latest Census information and the sample is geographically stratified to be representative of Canada.

Individuals were randomly called using random digit dialling with a maximum of five call backs.

The margin of error for this survey is ±3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

The research was commissioned by SecondStreet.org and was conducted by Nanos Research. Report one of two.

Note: Charts may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

TECHNICAL NOTE

Element	Description
Organization who commissioned the research	SecondStreet.org
Final Sample Size	1000 Randomly selected individuals.
Margin of Error	±3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.
Mode of Survey	RDD dual frame (land- and cell-lines) random telephone [omnibus] survey
Sampling Method Base	The sample included both land- and cell-lines RDD (Random Digit Dialed) across Canada.
Demographics (Captured)	Atlantic Canada, Quebec, Ontario, Prairies, British Columbia; Men and Women; 18 years and older. Six digit postal code was used to validate geography.
Fieldwork/Validation	Individuals were recruited using live interviews with live supervision to validate work, the research questions were administered online.
Number of Calls	Maximum of five call backs.
Time of Calls	Individuals were called between 12-5:30 pm and 6:30-9:30pm local time for the respondent.
Field Dates	May 31st to June 4th, 2019.
Language of Survey	The survey was conducted in both English and French.
Standards	This report exceeds the standards set forth by CRIC, ESOMAR and AAPOR.

Element	Description
Weighting of Data	The results were weighted by age and gender using the latest Census information (2016) and the sample is geographically stratified to ensure a distribution across all regions of Canada. See tables for full weighting disclosure
Screening	Screening ensured potential respondents did not work in the market research industry, in the advertising industry, in the media or a political party prior to administering the survey to ensure the integrity of the data.
Excluded Demographics	Individuals younger than 18 years old; individuals without land or cell lines could not participate.
Stratification	By age and gender using the latest Census information (2016) and the sample is geographically stratified to be representative of Canada. Smaller areas such as Atlantic Canada were marginally oversampled to allow for a minimum regional sample.
Estimated Response Rate	Eleven percent, consistent with industry norms.
Question Order	Question order in the preceding report reflects the order in which they appeared in the original questionnaire.
Question Content	This was module six of an omnibus survey. Previous modules were about international relations, the government, recycling, electoral issues, artificial intelligence and air travel. This is one report of two.
Question Wording	The questions in the preceding report are written exactly as they were asked to individuals.
Survey Company	Nanos Research
Contact	Contact Nanos Research for more information or with any concerns or questions. http://www.nanos.co Telephone:(613) 234-4666 ext. 237 Email: info@nanosresearch.com.

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TABULATIONS

2019-1454 – Second Street/Nanos Survey – Second Street May - STAT SHEET

				Region					Gender		Age		
			Canada 2019-05	Atlantic	Quebec	Ontario	Prairies	British Columbia	Male	Female	18 to 34	34 to 54	55 plus
Question - Do you support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or oppose having to pay a carbon tax in Canada?	Total	Unwgt N	1000	100	250	300	200	150	519	481	263	385	352
		Wgt N	1000	100	250	300	200	150	491	509	271	340	389
	Support	%	37.6	27.6	40.6	42.0	26.7	44.8	35.6	39.5	38.7	36.0	38.2
	Somewhat support	%	19.7	26.4	26.0	17.5	16.0	14.3	18.5	20.9	24.0	18.5	17.8
	Somewhat oppose	%	10.9	12.0	13.4	9.7	8.9	11.1	10.6	11.2	12.4	11.2	9.6
	Oppose	%	30.1	33.2	16.4	29.4	46.7	29.8	34.4	25.9	23.5	31.7	33.2
	Unsure	%	1.7	0.8	3.6	1.4	1.6	0.0	0.9	2.5	1.4	2.6	1.1

Nanos conducted an RDD dual frame (land- and cell- lines) hybrid telephone and online random survey of 1,000 Canadians, 18 years of age or older, between May 31st and June 4th, 2019. The margin of error for a random survey of 1,000 Canadians is ±3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

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			Region						Gender		Age		
			Canada 2019-05	Atlantic	Quebec	Ontario	Prairies	British Columbia	Male	Female	18 to 34	34 to 54	55 plus
Question - What is the maximum level of a carbon tax that you would be willing to pay to help fight climate change over the course of a year? [OPEN]	Total	Unwgt N	1000	100	250	300	200	150	519	481	263	385	352
		Wgt N	1000	100	250	300	200	150	491	509	271	340	389
		Mean	374.42	305.10	310.44	386.00	387.12	487.95	388.10	360.04	557.00	369.27	251.16
		Median	100.00	100.00	100.00	154.00	50.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	200.00	100.00	100.00
	.00	%	26.3	32.9	17.2	23.5	39.6	24.5	31.9	20.9	21.5	28.1	28.0
	.01	%	0.1	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0
	1.00	%	0.2	0.0	0.4	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.0
	2.00	%	0.1	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.0
	5.00	%	0.2	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.0
	10.00	%	0.9	0.0	1.2	1.4	0.6	0.7	0.2	1.7	0.7	0.9	1.2
	20.00	%	0.7	0.7	1.2	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.8	0.4	0.9	0.8
	25.00	%	0.9	0.0	2.2	0.4	1.1	0.0	0.8	1.0	0.4	0.5	1.5

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		Region						Gender		Age		
		Canada 2019-05	Atlantic	Quebec	Ontario	Prairies	British Columbia	Male	Female	18 to 34	34 to 54	55 plus
30.00	%	0.4	0.0	0.5	0.4	0.7	0.0	0.2	0.5	0.4	0.0	0.7
50.00	%	3.6	1.5	4.5	3.3	3.2	4.3	2.4	4.7	4.2	4.5	2.3
60.00	%	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0
75.00	%	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.4	0.0	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.3
100.00	%	13.7	17.8	20.3	9.0	10.0	14.4	12.4	15.0	10.0	13.2	16.8
102.00	%	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.0
109.00	%	0.1	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.0
120.00	%	0.6	0.7	0.9	0.2	0.5	0.8	0.8	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.9
125.00	%	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.3
150.00	%	0.7	1.1	0.4	1.7	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.9	1.2	0.5	0.6
154.00	%	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3
200.00	%	6.0	5.4	9.2	5.7	3.9	4.6	5.8	6.3	7.6	5.5	5.5
209.00	%	0.1	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0
250.00	%	2.2	3.4	1.6	3.4	1.4	0.6	1.5	2.8	3.4	2.0	1.4
288.00	%	0.1	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0
300.00	%	3.0	2.9	3.7	3.8	1.3	2.8	2.6	3.5	1.9	1.6	5.2
350.00	%	0.1	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.3
360.00	%	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.0
365.00	%	0.1	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3
400.00	%	1.3	0.0	0.5	3.0	0.0	2.1	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.5
500.00	%	10.0	9.8	7.6	11.9	10.0	10.4	10.3	9.8	10.5	10.4	9.4

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		Region						Gender		Age		
		Canada 2019-05	Atlantic	Quebec	Ontario	Prairies	British Columbia	Male	Female	18 to 34	34 to 54	55 plus
599.00	%	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0
600.00	%	0.8	0.0	0.4	1.0	1.6	0.5	1.2	0.5	1.1	0.7	0.6
700.00	%	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.0
750.00	%	0.3	0.0	0.8	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.3
800.00	%	0.2	0.0	0.4	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.0
900.00	%	0.1	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3
1000.00	%	9.1	5.4	7.9	9.9	10.2	10.8	11.0	7.3	11.9	8.6	7.7
1200.00	%	0.3	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.2
1208.00	%	0.1	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.0
1500.00	%	0.8	0.0	0.4	0.9	0.5	2.0	0.9	0.6	0.8	1.3	0.3
2000.00	%	1.0	1.9	0.9	0.0	1.3	1.9	0.2	1.7	1.9	0.9	0.3
2400.00	%	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.3	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.0
2500.00	%	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0
3000.00	%	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.0
4000.00	%	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.4	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.3	0.4	0.0
5000.00	%	0.9	1.1	0.0	1.3	1.5	0.7	1.0	0.8	2.3	0.5	0.3
10000.00	%	0.2	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.0
Unsure	%	13.1	9.8	15.1	14.7	9.2	14.4	9.3	16.8	12.7	13.5	13.1

Nanos conducted an RDD dual frame (land- and cell- lines) hybrid telephone and online random survey of 1,000 Canadians, 18 years of age or older, between May 31st and June 4th, 2019. The margin of error for a random survey of 1,000 Canadians is ±3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

2019-1454 – Second Street/Nanos Survey – Second Street May - STAT SHEET

				Region					Gender		Age		
			Canada 2019-05	Atlantic	Quebec	Ontario	Prairies	British Columbia	Male	Female	18 to 34	34 to 54	55 plus
Question - Which of the following statements best represents your personal view? [RANDOMIZE]	Total	Unwgt N	1000	100	250	300	200	150	519	481	263	385	352
		Wgt N	1000	100	250	300	200	150	491	509	271	340	389
		Mean	1.62	1.68	1.51	1.60	1.72	1.65	1.67	1.57	1.56	1.63	1.65
	The government should use carbon taxes to help fight climate change	%	48.3	42.1	59.2	47.8	37.3	50.3	44.5	52.0	54.3	45.2	47.0
	There are better ways to fight climate change than a carbon tax.	%	44.2	50.2	33.7	46.5	55.4	38.1	46.6	41.8	37.6	48.5	45.0
	The government shouldn't worry about climate change	%	5.0	4.9	4.1	4.0	5.3	8.0	6.7	3.3	5.8	4.9	4.4
	Unsure	%	2.5	2.9	3.1	1.7	2.1	3.6	2.2	2.8	2.3	1.4	3.7

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