

PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH on the National Adaptation Strategy

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Executive Summary
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**For more information on this report, please contact
Environment and Climate Change Canada at: POR-ROP@ec.gc.ca**

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Public Inquiries Centre
12th Floor, Fontaine Building
200 Sacré-Coeur Boulevard
Gatineau QC K1A 0H3
Telephone: 819-938-3860
Toll Free: 1-800-668-6767 (in Canada only)
Email: enviroinfo@ec.gc.ca

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Recherche sur l'opinion publique à propos de la stratégie nationale d'adaptation – Sommaire exécutif

Executive summary

Leger Marketing Inc. (Leger) is pleased to present this report to Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) on the findings from the National Adaptation Strategy (NAS) quantitative survey, designed to learn about the vulnerabilities that people living in Canada are facing from climate change.

Background and objectives

More and more evidence is pointing to the urgency for climate action, underscoring the need for communities to adapt to the changing climate and prepare for the most challenging impacts of climate change. A noticeable increase in extreme weather events across Canada, particularly extreme weather events in B.C. and Atlantic Canada in 2021, have made the importance of adapting to a changing climate top of mind for people living in Canada.

Under the strengthened climate plan, released in December 2020, *A Healthy Environment and a Healthy Economy*, the Government of Canada committed to develop a National Adaptation Strategy (NAS) to build on the successes of the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change and create a more ambitious, strategic, and collaborative approach to climate adaptation. The NAS establishes a shared vision for climate resilience in Canada, identifies key priorities for increased collaboration and establishes a framework for measuring progress at the national level.

The NAS provides a blueprint for whole of society action to help communities and residents of Canada better adapt to and prepare for the impacts of climate change. A crucial part of determining what actions are feasible or would be easily adopted by residents is to first understand their opinions and perspectives on climate change. Therefore, a survey was developed to ask people living in Canada about recent experiences they have had, their feelings towards climate change, and what they are currently doing to adapt.

The survey was designed to provide Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) with insights on:

- Whether Canadians understand the impacts of climate change and its effects on health and safety of Canadians, the environment, and socio-economic system;
- Whether Canadians are aware of governmental actions being taken to adapt to the impacts of climate change;
- What adaptation solutions Canadians are aware of in their communities and beyond, and whether they would support increased investments for these solutions;
- What language and framing resonates with Canadians in terms of adapting and building resilience to the impacts of climate change and increasing literacy on this issue.

Similar to the way the NAS is laid out, the survey also focused on five systems, Disaster Resilience, Health and Wellbeing, Natural Environment, Resilient Infrastructure, and the Economy, where participants were asked individual questions pertaining to each of these systems.

Intended use of the research

The findings of the survey will be used in the development of policies, programs and initiatives, pertaining to the NAS to improve communications, to gain critical insights on the opinions, issues, and challenges Canadians are facing, and to better prepare communities for the impacts of climate change.

Methodology

This public opinion research was conducted via a hybrid approach, using Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing (CATI) technology and Computer Aided Web Interviewing (CAWI) technology. Fieldwork for the survey was carried out from June 23rd to August 2nd, 2022. A total of 2,008 Canadians aged 18 or older were surveyed, with a focus on those who have been most affected by climate change impacts. Detailed information on the communities that were included in the sampling procedure is presented in Appendix A.2 (of the full report). The survey targeted the general population and individuals who have been most affected by climate change impacts, who were originally supposed to be targeted via telephone. However, considering the response rate and the numbers available, data collection maximized web respondents to help reach the objectives. Ultimately, the sample included 1,000 respondents living in a community that is impacted by climate change, making up half of the overall sample. The average length of interview was 16 minutes and 35 seconds on the web, and 27 minutes on the phone. Leger used their panel to target randomized people for the general population and for the web portion and used their phone lists for the telephone interviews for the populations most impacted by climate change. The response rates for both the web and phone portions of the survey were 15%, meaning for every 100 calls (or web survey ads), 15 people completed the survey. Since panel-based samples are not probabilistic in nature, no margin of error can be calculated.

Weighting was done according to age, gender, province, education, spoken language, presence of children in the household, and belonging to a community that is most affected by climate change or not, to help readjust the sample for minor imbalances.

Leger adheres to the most stringent guidelines for quantitative research. The survey instrument was compliant with the Standards of Conduct of Government of Canada Public Opinion Research.

A complete methodological description is provided in the Appendices section of this document (please see Appendix A of the full report).

The total estimated value of this contract amounts to CAD \$56,500 (including HST).

Overview of the findings

Sensibility and habits

- A vast majority of respondents consider climate change to be an important issue (86%), and eight in ten are concerned about its impacts on Canada (79%).
- Climate change impacts have become more severe according to seven in ten respondents (70%).
- Canadians have somewhat negative attitudes towards climate change as they are afraid of its impacts, and around half of them feel sad and helpless (53% and 52% respectively). However, respondents remain optimistic as they are motivated to do what they can to protect themselves (83%), and six in ten believe there will be adaptation solutions (61%).
- According to respondents, having a list of actions that they can take (52%) and better understanding the positive and direct impacts of changing some of their habits (49%) are the most

efficient ways for Canadians to help themselves and their families to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

- Three in four (77%) Canadians believe they could be doing more to adapt to the future impacts of climate change.

Climate change impacts

- Rated on a 10-level scale, planting vegetation (7.5), having an emergency kit (6.8), and rainwater harvesting (6.5) were considered to be the most impactful actions in terms of reducing an individual's risk to climate change impacts, while wildfire management (7.1), stormwater, flood or erosion management (7.0), drought management (7.0) are the most impactful in reducing the community's risk to climate change.
- More frequent extreme weather and climate events (55%), reduced glacier cover (45%), and sea-level rise (43%) are the top three impacts of climate change according to respondents.
- Seven in ten respondents (70%) predict that climate change will become more serious within the next 5 to 10 years.
- Respondents are somewhat aware of climate change impacts on different aspects: around three in four consider that our environment, our infrastructure, our security, and our health and well-being are already being impacted by climate change.
- In terms of infrastructure specifically, water (79%) and energy and utilities (70%) are the aspects Canadians are most worried about. In terms biodiversity, freshwater ecosystems (56%) are considered the most worrisome, while agriculture (75%), forestry (65%) and fisheries (61%) are the sectors people are most concerned about of the Canadian economy when it comes to climate change.

Awareness of government actions to adapt to climate change

- Three in four respondents believe that more could be done for them to feel prepared (74%) for more impacts of climate change in the future.
- Only 5% of surveyed Canadians had heard of the National Adaptation Strategy prior to the survey, and a majority of those who did could not describe their understanding of it (63%).
- Around half of respondents were not aware of measures being implemented in their respective communities (51%), but those who were mentioned urban greening initiatives (18%) and updated flood maps (14%) mainly.
- The most important reasons to adapt to climate change according to respondents are to protect our agriculture and food production (70%), and for future generations (61%).
- Half of respondents said that they are part of a community (50%), but one in five noted that they are not close enough to people in their community to ask for a favour (20%).

Those most affected by climate change impacts

- A vast majority of respondents have experienced a climate-related event (81%), heatwaves being the most common one (59%).
- These climate-related events have caused a variety of impacts on communities and households, including physical health problems (18%), house/property damage (16%) and mental health problems (15%).

- Around one individual in ten who have experienced a climate-related event expected more actions to be taken by their provincial (29%) and federal (31%) government. These two institutions also come out at the top of the list in terms of support expectations (federal government: 31%; provincial/territorial government: 30%)
- Most respondents said it took less than a year for their life to return to normal (59%).
- Three in four of those who have been most affected by climate change impacts said they were concerned about the future considering how the event they experienced was managed (73%).

How people who have been most affected by climate change impacts differ from the rest

- Overall, respondents who have been most affected by climate change impacts were more likely to consider climate change to be an important issue, and they were also more concerned about it.
- They were more likely to think that the issue has gotten worse and that it will become more serious within the next 5 to 10 years.
- While they showed more negative attitudes towards climate change (e.g., sadness, helplessness), they were still motivated to protect themselves and were hopeful of solutions.
- They were more likely to feel that climate change impacts the economy, the environment, health and well-being, security, infrastructure, and Canadian culture and identity.
- Around one in four of those who have been most affected by climate change impacts considered themselves more at risk than the communities around them, and they were more likely to report experiencing most climate-related events. Around a third of them expected more actions to be taken by their provincial and federal government, and eight in ten feel that more should be done for them to feel prepared.

Phrasing and wording preferences

- When asked about their favorite term referring to adaptation to climate change impacts, "Preparing for climate change" came out as the most preferred term (23%), closely followed by climate preparedness (20%).
- The sentences using the term "climate preparedness" harnessed the most support from respondents.
- French-speakers also seemed to like the term "adaptive capacity" (*capacité d'adaptation / adaptabilité*). While they did not express their preference for the term explicitly, they were more likely to agree with the statements using this phrasing.
- English-speakers preferred the term "climate preparedness".

Notes on interpretation of the research findings

The views and observations expressed in this document do not reflect those of Environment and Climate Change Canada. This report was compiled by Leger, based on the research conducted specifically for this project.

Political neutrality certification

Research Firm: Leger Marketing Inc. (Leger)

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Leger Marketing Inc. hereby certifies 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. 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:

Christian Bourque

Senior Researcher, Léger

Date: March 21, 2022