Polarization over Energy and Climate: Oil & Gas, Federal/Provincial Roles

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For additional analysis, see our “In Brief” at Positive Energy’s Website.
Research Questions

1. To what extent are attitudes – across a variety of different energy contexts – polarized in Canada?

2. What sociodemographic characteristics or political preferences underlie views and attitudes towards energy?

3. Along what dimensions and in which sectors are Canadians most divided?

4. Are there areas of the energy and climate context that Canadians agree on?

5. How does political competition (or polarization) shape expectations for change in the energy sector?
Methodology

• Online survey via Qualtrics
• Dates: Sept. 9-19 for about 90%, complete by Sept. 29 2019
  • Caveat 1: Election context (prior to Collapse of oil prices and COVID-19)
  • Caveat 2: Bivariate analysis

• N = 2738
  • 5 regional subsamples (BC, Prairie, ON, QC, Atlantic): n= 500+
  • (Margin of Error is not applicable for this kind of survey)

• Age groups
  • Silent 1928-45, Boomers 1946-64, Gen X 1965-80, Millennials 1981-95, Gen Z 1996+
Defining Polarized Opinion

- Each example graph shows the % of respondents choosing a Likert Scale number from 1 to 7 (e.g., from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”).
- Ex. 1 shows polarized opinion (inverted U shape), with opinion concentrated at the extreme ends of the scale.
- Ex. 2 shows opinion that is fragmented, but relatively few take extreme positions.
- Ex 3. shows opinion that tends toward strong agreement.
- The distinction between polarized/fragmented is key for policymakers: polarized views are hardened and difficult to change; fragmented are more amenable to compromise.
Each graph shows how public opinion expresses across groups; these could be regions, age groups, community type, or partisan affiliation.

- Graph 1 shows highly disparate measures across groups (polarized), graphs 2 & 3 show fragmentation and agreement, respectively, with no polarized opinion.
Positive Energy asked Canadians for their views on the importance of oil and gas now and in the future, and on the specific prospects for their production and export.

We also asked their degree of support for oil and gas production and exports in the context of rising global demand and if exports can displace emissions abroad.
Statement: How important is the oil and gas sector to Canada’s (current/future) economy?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance Level</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all important</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimally important</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly important</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly important</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite important</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely important</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Importance of Oil and Gas: Party

Statement: How important is the oil and gas sector to Canada’s current economy?
Importance of Oil and Gas: Ideology

Statement: How important is the oil and gas sector to Canada’s current economy?
Importance of Oil and Gas: Region

Statement: How important is the oil and gas sector to Canada’s current economy?
Importance of Oil and Gas: Age

Statement: How important is the oil and gas sector to Canada’s current economy?
Importance of Oil and Gas: Gender

Statement: How important is the oil and gas sector to Canada’s current economy?
**Future Importance of Oil and Gas: Party**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Importance Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Party (30%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Party (25%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloc Québécois (4%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP (13%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Party (12%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People's Party (2%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.6 / 7</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Statement:** How important is the oil and gas sector to Canada’s future economy?
Future Importance of Oil and Gas: Ideology

Statement: How important is the oil and gas sector to Canada’s future economy?
Statement: How important is the oil and gas sector to Canada’s future economy?
Future Importance of Oil and Gas: Age

Statement: How important is the oil and gas sector to Canada’s future economy?
Future Importance of Oil and Gas: Gender

Statement: How important is the oil and gas sector to Canada’s future economy?
Statement: Exporting Canadian natural gas to countries that use more polluting energy like coal is one of the most important things Canada can do to address climate change.
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Natural Gas Exports: Region

Statement: Exporting Canadian natural gas to countries that use more polluting energy like coal is one of the most important things Canada can do to address climate change.
Natural Gas Exports: Age

Statement: Exporting Canadian natural gas to countries that use more polluting energy like coal is one of the most important things Canada can do to address climate change.
Natural Gas Exports: Gender

Statement: Exporting Canadian natural gas to countries that use more polluting energy like coal is one of the most important things Canada can do to address climate change.
Oil & Gas Production and Emissions

Statement: Canada should expand oil and gas production if it can produce its oil and gas with lower emissions than other countries.
Oil & Gas Production and Emissions: Party

Statement: Canada should expand oil and gas production if it can produce its oil and gas with lower emissions than other countries
Oil & Gas Production and Emissions: Ideology

Statement: Canada should expand oil and gas production if it can produce its oil and gas with lower emissions than other countries
Oil & Gas Production and Emissions: Region

Statement: Canada should expand oil and gas production if it can produce its oil and gas with lower emissions than other countries
Oil & Gas Production and Emissions: Age

Statement: Canada should expand oil and gas production if it can produce its oil and gas with lower emissions than other countries
Oil & Gas Production and Emissions: Gender

Statement: Canada should expand oil and gas production if it can produce its oil and gas with lower emissions than other countries
Oil & Gas Exports and Global Demand

Statement: Since global demand for oil and gas is rising, Canada should expand production of oil and gas for export
Oil & Gas Exports and Global Demand: Party

Statement: Since global demand for oil and gas is rising, Canada should expand production of oil and gas for export
Oil & Gas Exports and Global Demand: Ideology

Statement: Since global demand for oil and gas is rising, Canada should expand production of oil and gas for export
Oil & Gas Exports and Global Demand: Region

Statement: Since global demand for oil and gas is rising, Canada should expand production of oil and gas for export
Statement: Since global demand for oil and gas is rising, Canada should expand production of oil and gas for export
Oil & Gas Exports and Global Demand: Gender

Statement: Since global demand for oil and gas is rising, Canada should expand production of oil and gas for export
Reducing the economic size of the oil and gas sectors could have significant effects on many Canadians. Positive Energy asked respondents if they think that phasing out oil and gas is necessary or whether technology will reduce emissions. We also asked whether phasing out oil and gas was fair to producing provinces, and whether governments should invest to retrain workers who lose their jobs as Canada addresses climate change.
Statement: Phasing out oil and gas production and consumption is unnecessary because new technologies will dramatically reduce emissions from oil and gas.
Necessity of Phasing Out Oil & Gas: Party

Statement: Phasing out oil and gas production and consumption is unnecessary because new technologies will dramatically reduce emissions from oil and gas
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Necessity of Phasing Out Oil & Gas: Region

Statement: Phasing out oil and gas production and consumption is unnecessary because new technologies will dramatically reduce emissions from oil and gas.
Necessity of Phasing Out Oil & Gas: Age

Statement: Phasing out oil and gas production and consumption is unnecessary because new technologies will dramatically reduce emissions from oil and gas.
Necessity of Phasing Out Oil & Gas: Gender

Statement: Phasing out oil and gas production and consumption is unnecessary because new technologies will dramatically reduce emissions from oil and gas.
Fairness of Phasing Out Oil & Gas

Statement: Phasing out oil and gas production is unfair to people in provinces that produce it
Fairness of Phasing Out Oil & Gas: Party

Statement: Phasing out oil and gas production is unfair to people in provinces that produce it
Statement: Phasing out oil and gas production is unfair to people in provinces that produce it.

Overall score: 4.6/7
Fairness of Phasing Out Oil & Gas: Region

Statement: Phasing out oil and gas production is unfair to people in provinces that produce it
Fairness of Phasing Out Oil & Gas: Age

Statement: Phasing out oil and gas production is unfair to people in provinces that produce it
Fairness of Phasing Out Oil & Gas: Gender

Statement: Phasing out oil and gas production is unfair to people in provinces that produce it
Statement: Canada needs to invest tax dollars into retraining workers who may lose their jobs as the country addresses climate change
Retraining: Party

Statement: Canada needs to invest tax dollars into retraining workers who may lose their jobs as the country addresses climate change
Retraining: Ideology

Statement: Canada needs to invest tax dollars into retraining workers who may lose their jobs as the country addresses climate change
Statement: Canada needs to invest tax dollars into retraining workers who may lose their jobs as the country addresses climate change.
Retraining: Age

Statement: Canada needs to invest tax dollars into retraining workers who may lose their jobs as the country addresses climate change
Retraining: Gender

Statement: Canada needs to invest tax dollars into retraining workers who may lose their jobs as the country addresses climate change
Role of Federal and Provincial Governments

Energy and climate policies in Canada are the result of federal and provincial decision-making processes.

Positive Energy asked Canadians whether the federal government should develop a long-term energy vision for the country, whether it has a role in energy resource development, and whether provinces should have flexibility to tackle climate change as they see fit.
Federal Development of Long-Term Vision

Statement: The federal government needs to develop a long-term energy vision for Canada – even if some provinces don’t agree with it
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Long-Term Vision: Gender

Statement: The federal government needs to develop a long-term energy vision for Canada – even if some provinces don’t agree with it
Federal Role in Energy Development

Statement: The federal government has no role in how energy resources are developed in provinces
Federal Role in Energy: Party

Statement: The federal government has no role in how energy resources are developed in provinces

Overall: 3.8 / 7
Federal Role in Energy: Ideology

Statement: The federal government has no role in how energy resources are developed in provinces

Overall: 3.8 / 7
Statement: The federal government has no role in how energy resources are developed in provinces
Federal Role in Energy: Age

Statement: The federal government has no role in How energy resources are developed in provinces

Overall: 3.8 / 7
Federal Role in Energy: Gender

Statement: The federal government has no role in How energy resources are developed in provinces
Provinces and Climate Change

Statement: Provinces should be able to address climate change in whatever way they see fit
Provinces and Climate Change: Party

Statement: Provinces should be able to address climate change in whatever way they see fit
Provinces and Climate Change: Ideology

Statement: Provinces should be able to address climate change in whatever way they see fit

Overall 4.5/7
Provinces and Climate Change: Region

Statement: Provinces should be able to address climate change in whatever way they see fit.
Provinces and Climate Change: Age

Statement: Provinces should be able to address climate change in whatever way they see fit
Provinces and Climate Change: Gender

Statement: Provinces should be able to address climate change in whatever way they see fit
Methodological notes
Note on Ideology Scoring

For ideology scoring, we start with a set of 13 questions adapted from the Pew Research Center (https://www.pewresearch.org/) to measure ideology empirically. These questions are well-established and have been shown to be very strong predictors of actual ideological beliefs. Rather than ask questions about party, these use grouped (social or economic – see below) questions to determine belief patterns of survey respondents. We average the Likert scale responses to these questions to reflect the left-leaning as the maximum score and the right-leaning as the minimum score in all questions.

"Don't know" values were abundant (sometimes up to 25% of all questions in the block). We replaced all “Don't know” and missing values with the average value for each question included in a set (social or economic – see below). The scale variables resulting from averaging each set of questions were recomputed into quartiles (the highest quartile being that with cases furthest to the left). That new ordinal quartile variable is the one that our graphs show.

Social score (Pew): The growing number of newcomers from other countries is a threat to traditional Canadian customs and values; One parent can bring up a child as well as two parents together; I never doubt the existence of God; It seems as though minorities want too many rights just for themselves; Abortion should be illegal in all or most cases; Dissent is a critical component of democracy.

Economic score (Pew): The government should help more needy people even if it means going deeper in debt; Government regulation of business usually does more harm than good; Labour unions are necessary to protect the working person; Poor people have become too dependent on government assistance programs; Business corporations make too much profit; The government needs to dramatically reduce inequalities between the rich and poor.