

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

Rafael Aguirre, University of Ottawa

Stephen Bird, Clarkson University

Brendan Frank, University of Ottawa

Monica Gattinger, University of Ottawa

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POSITIVE ENERGY

CANADA'S ENERGY FUTURE IN AN
AGE OF CLIMATE CHANGE



uOttawa

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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?**

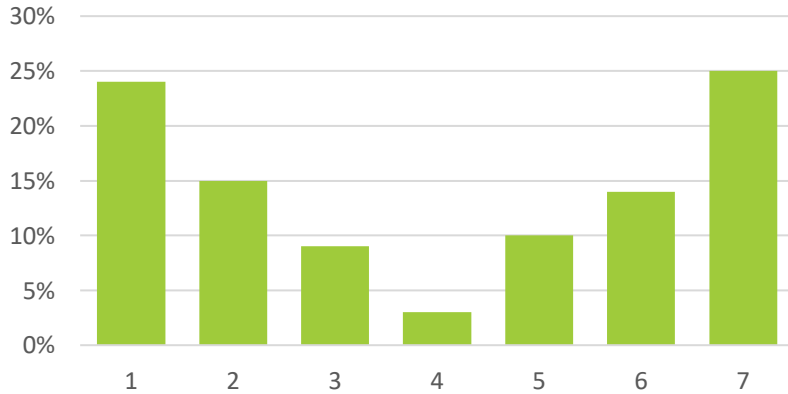


Methodology

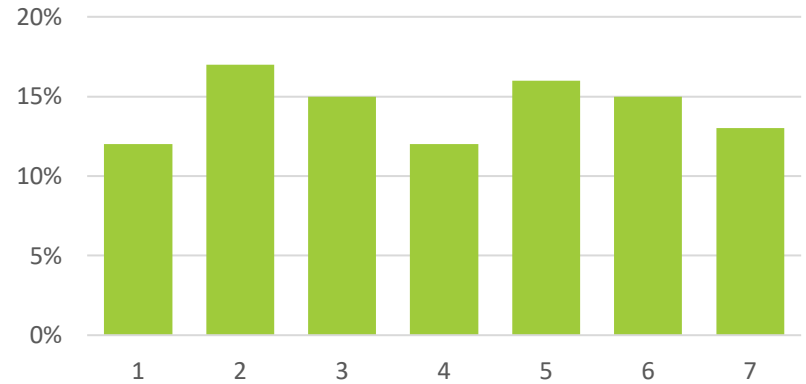
- **Online survey via Qualtrics**
- **Dates: Sept. 9-19 for about 90%, complete by Sept. 29 2019**
 - Caveat 1: Election context (prior to Collapse of oil prices and COVID-19)
 - Caveat 2: Bivariate analysis
- **N = 2738**
 - 5 regional subsamples (BC, Prairie, ON, QC, Atlantic): n= 500+
 - (Margin of 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

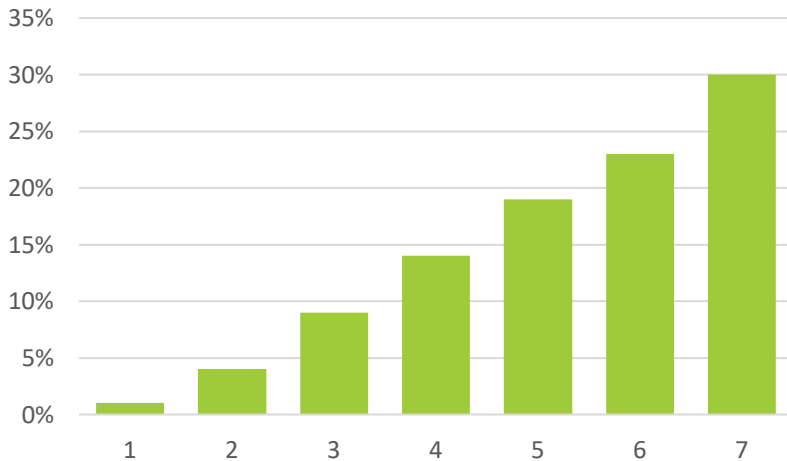
Polarized opinion



Fragmented opinion, not polarized



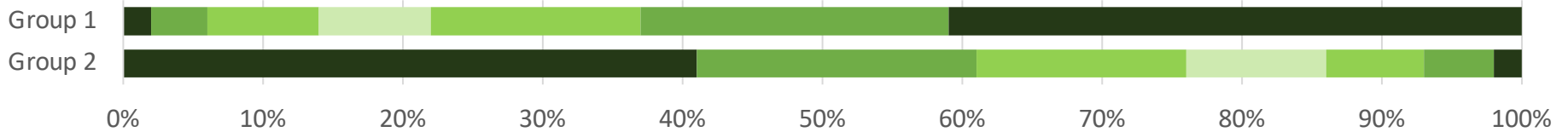
Opinion in agreement



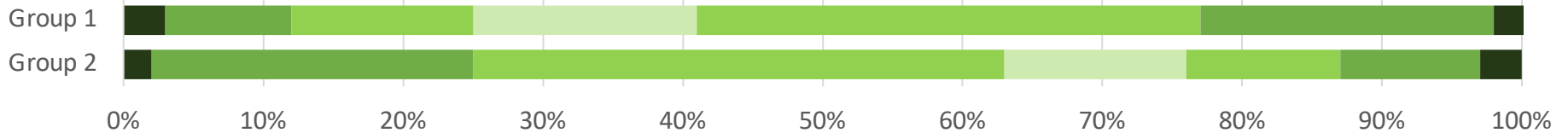
- Each example graph shows the % of respondents choosing a Likert Scale number from 1 to 7 (e.g., from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”).
- Ex. 1 shows polarized opinion (inverted U shape), with opinion concentrated at the extreme ends of the scale.
- Ex. 2 shows opinion that is fragmented, but 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**

Polarized Opinion Between Groups

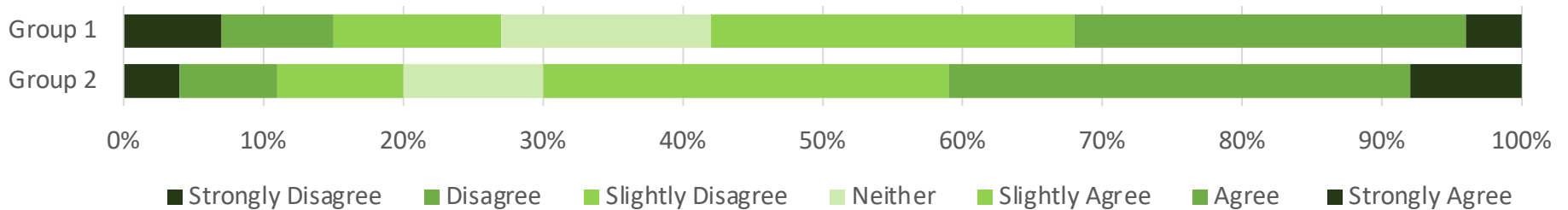
1. Polarized opinion



2. Fragmented opinion, not polarized



3. Opinion in agreement



- 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

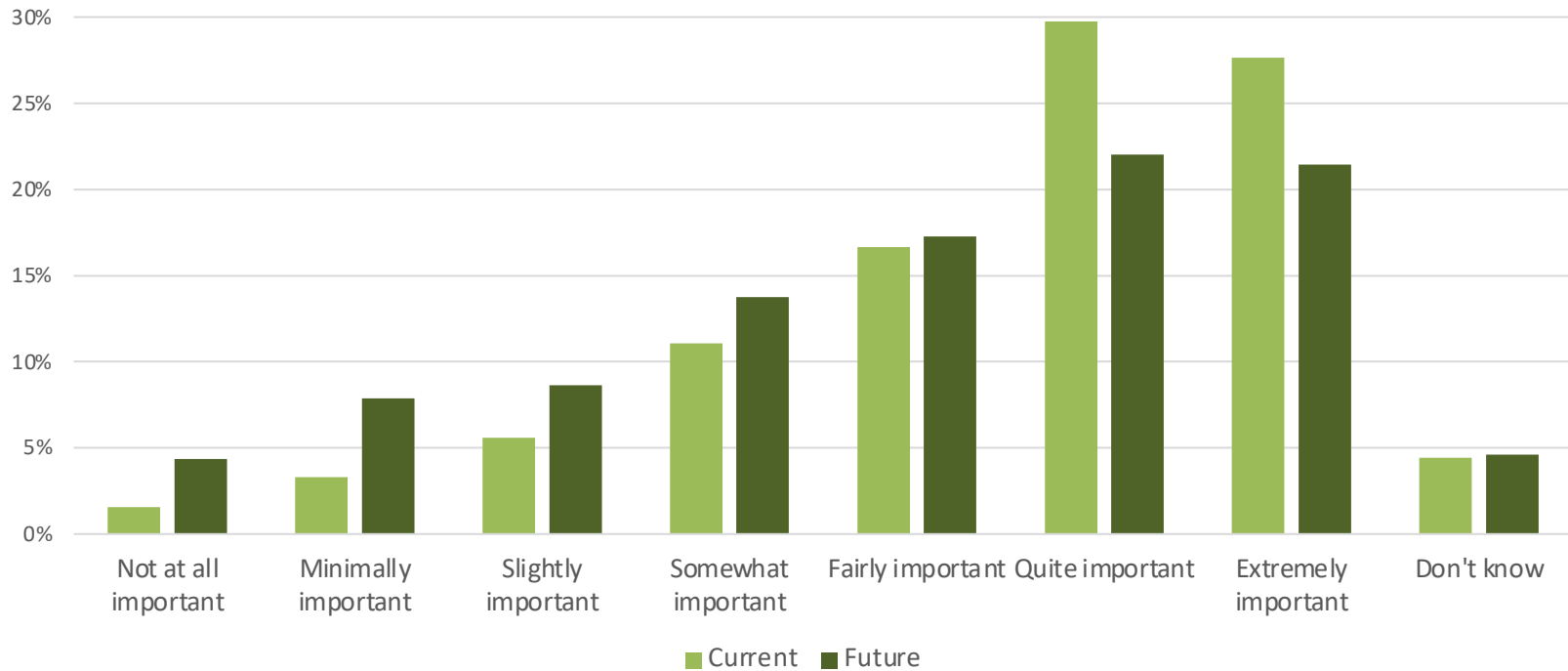
Oil and Gas: Importance, production, exports



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.

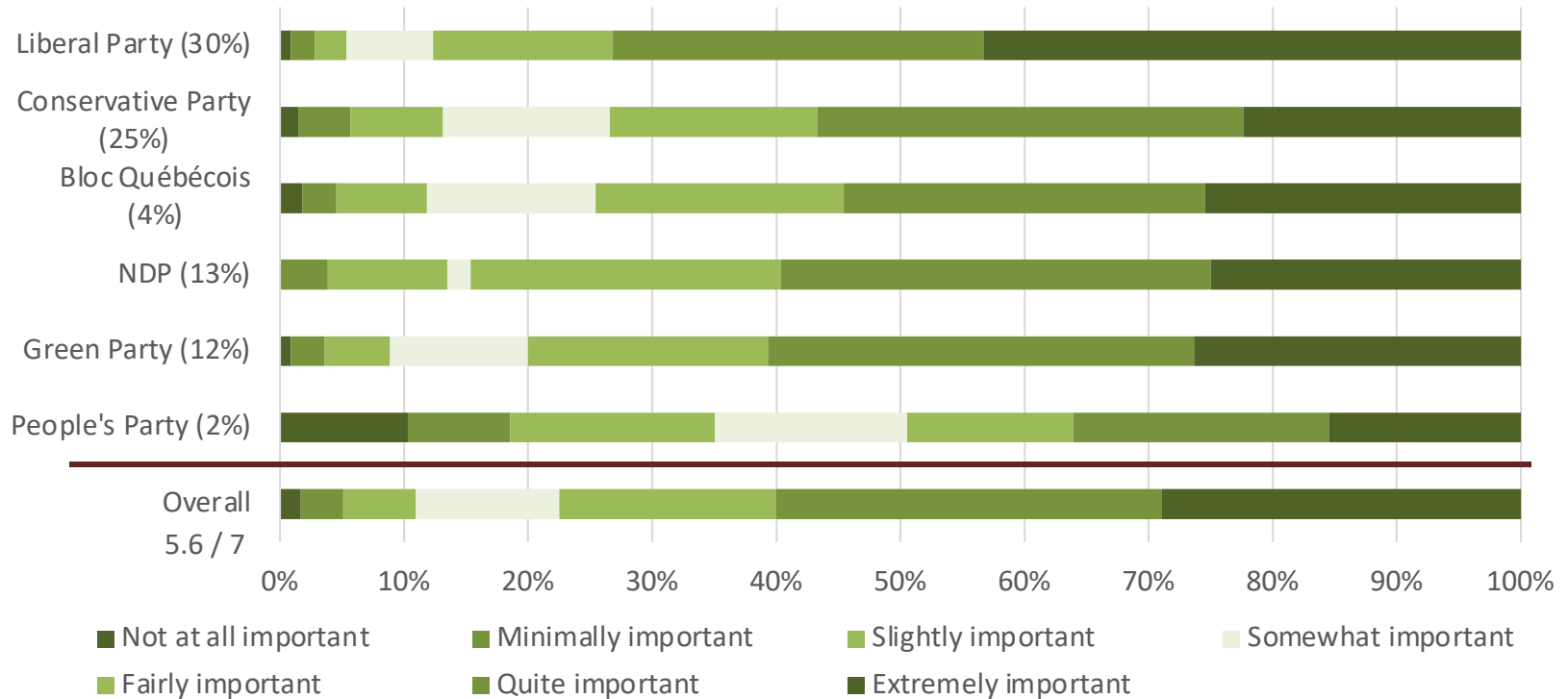
We also asked their degree of support for oil and gas production and exports in the context of rising global demand and if exports can displace emissions abroad.

Importance of Oil and Gas



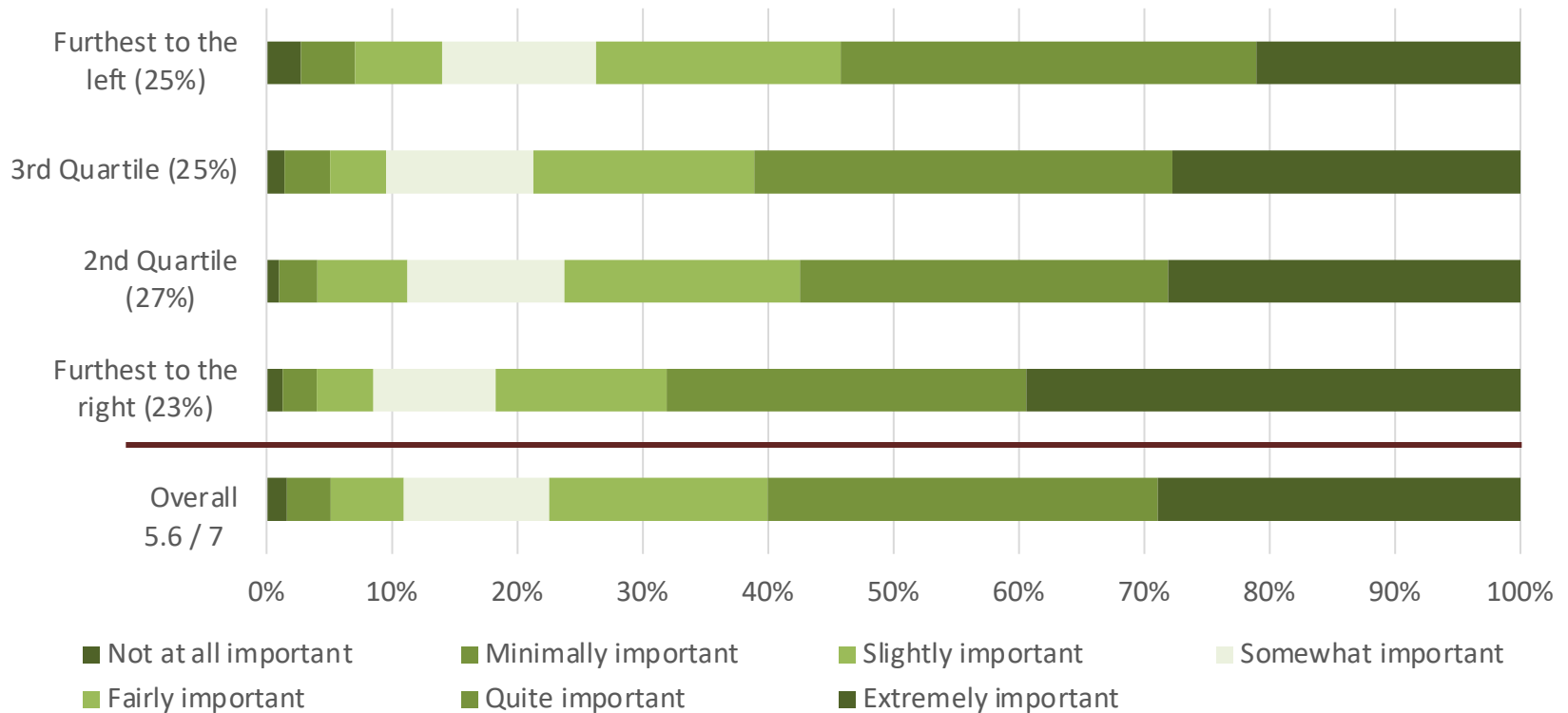
Statement: How important is the oil and gas sector to Canada's (current/future) economy?

Importance of Oil and Gas: Party



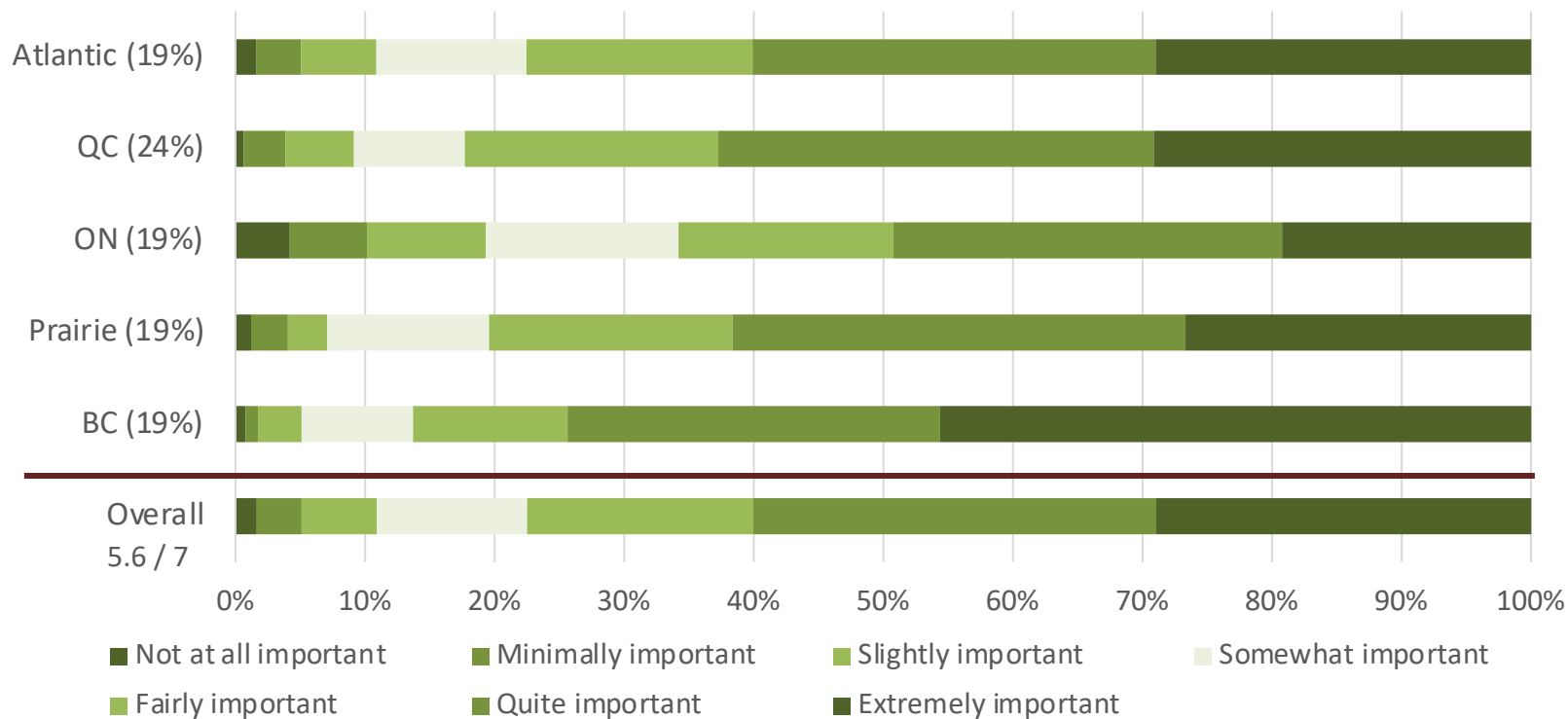
Statement: How important is the oil and gas sector to Canada's current economy?

Importance of Oil and Gas: Ideology



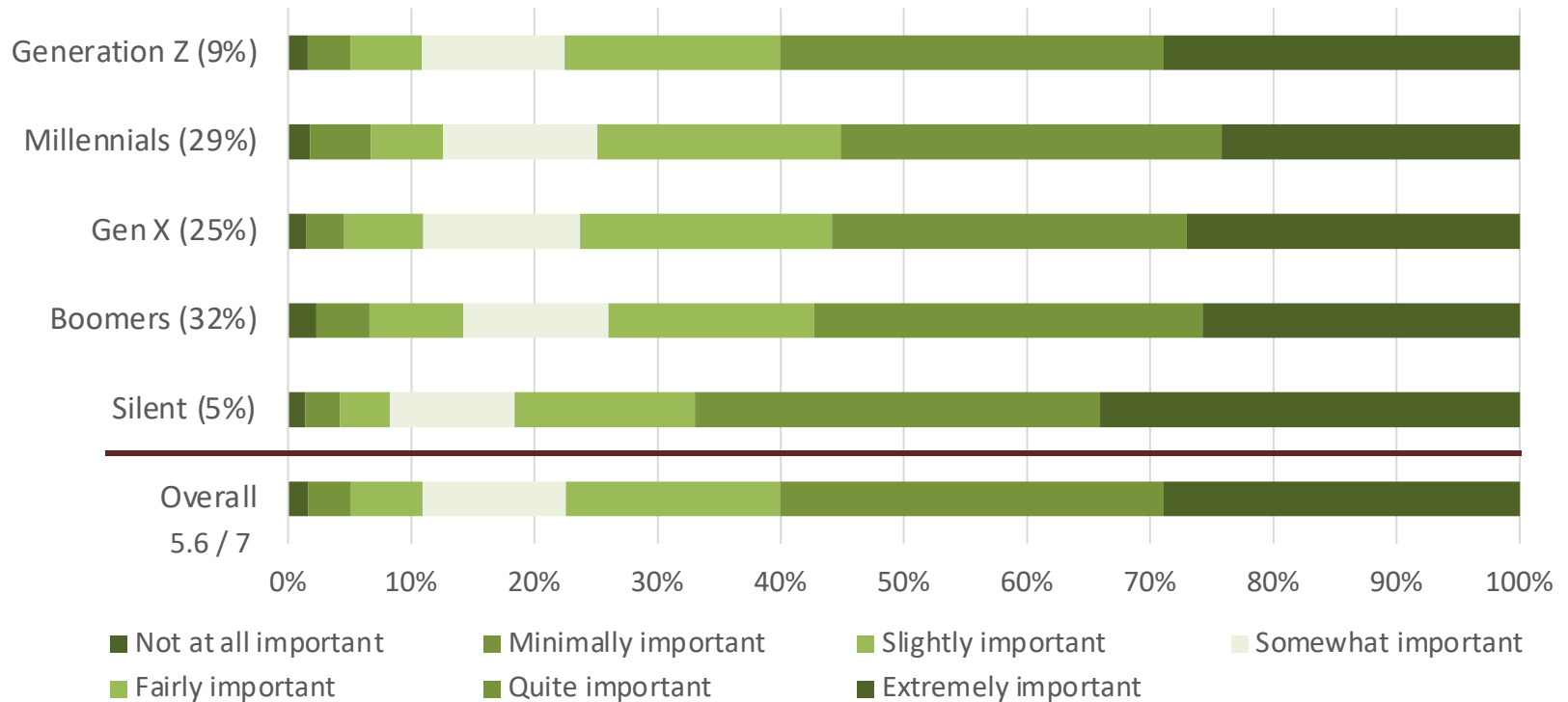
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Importance of Oil and Gas: Region



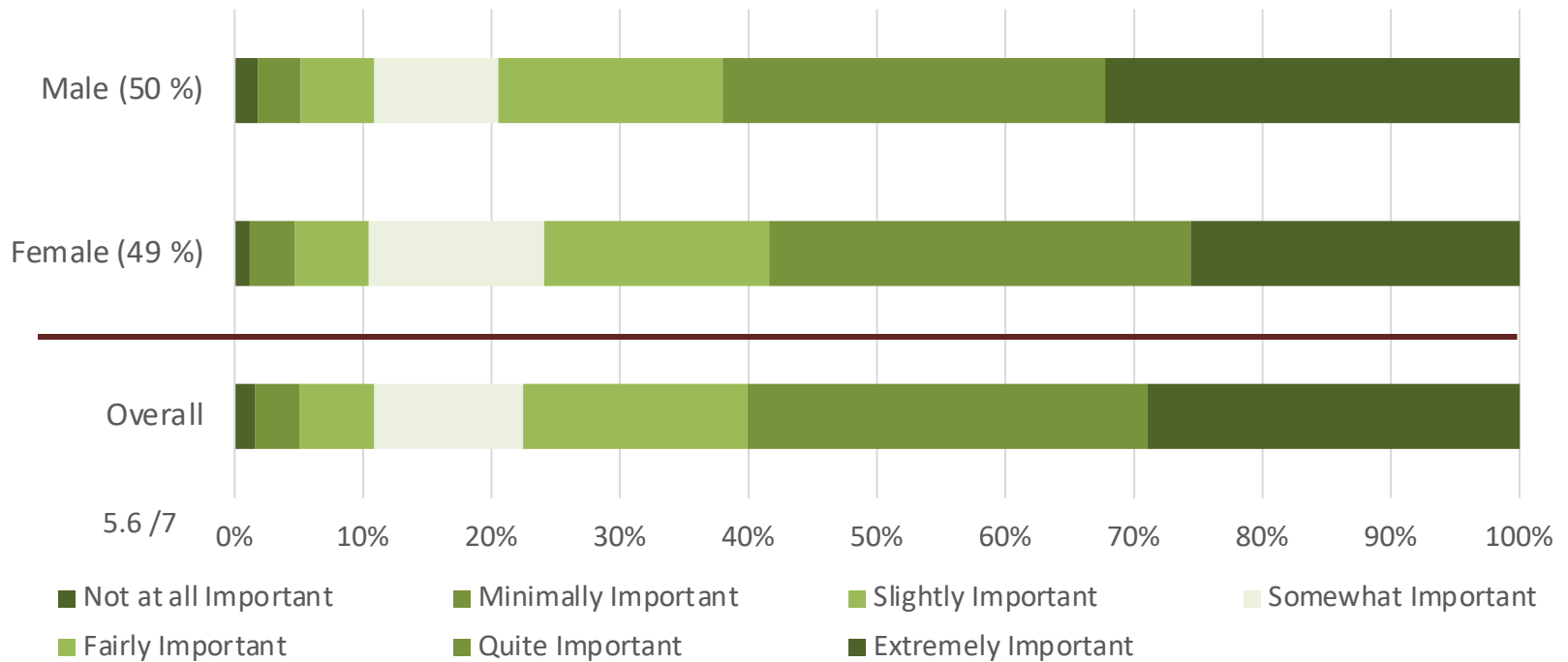
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Importance of Oil and Gas: Age



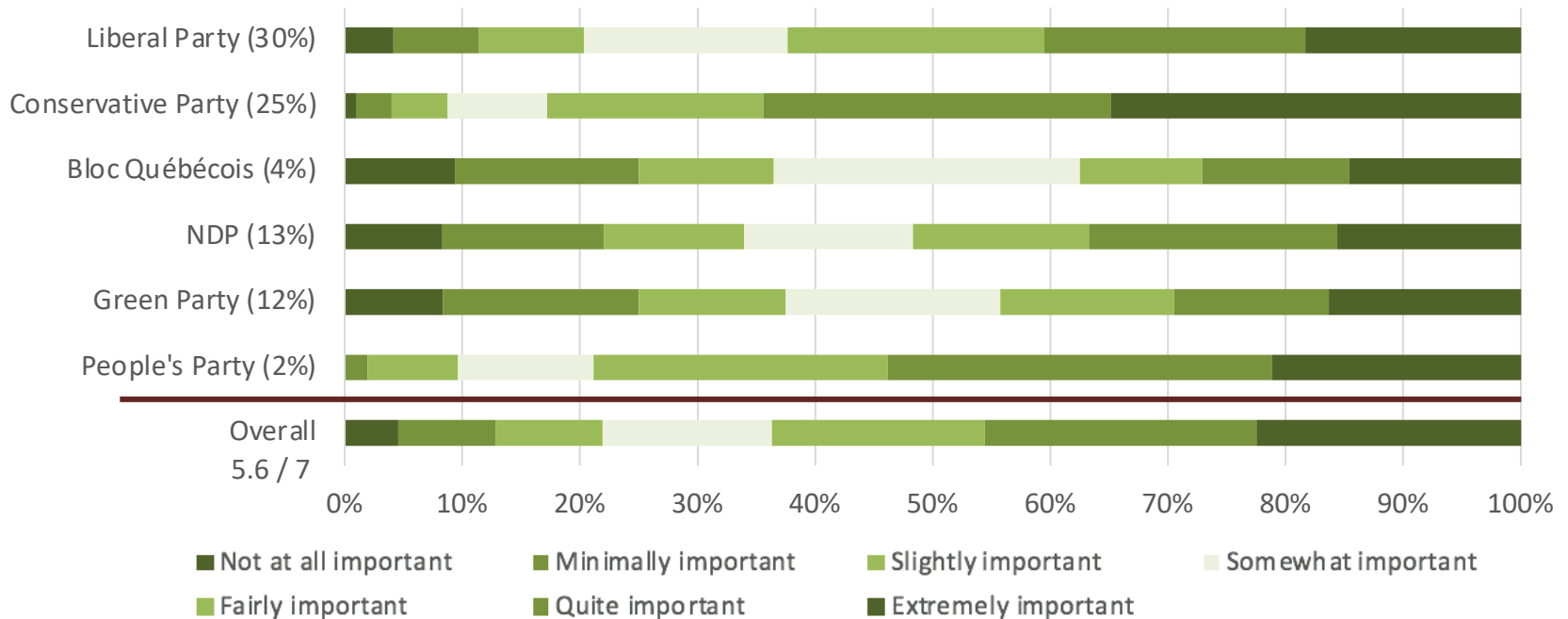
Statement: How important is the oil and gas sector to Canada's current economy?

Importance of Oil and Gas: Gender



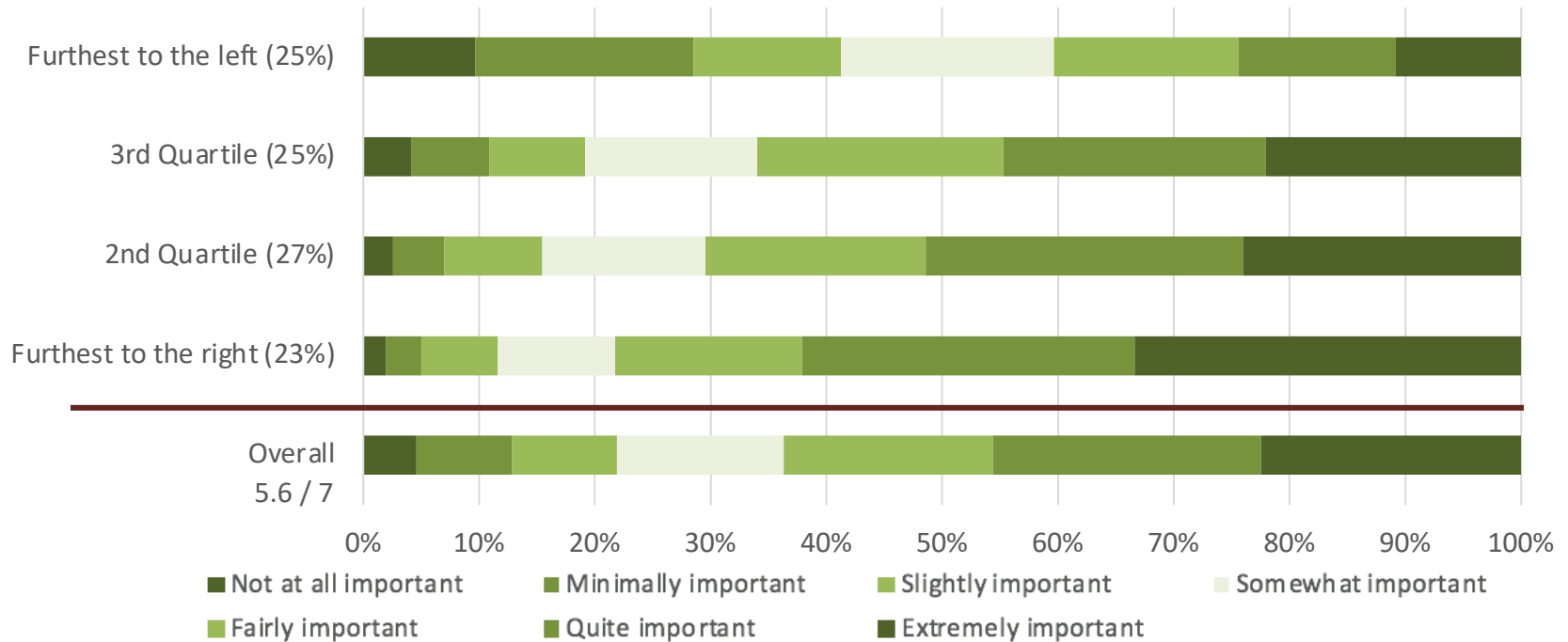
Statement: How important is the oil and gas sector to Canada's current economy?

Future Importance of Oil and Gas: Party



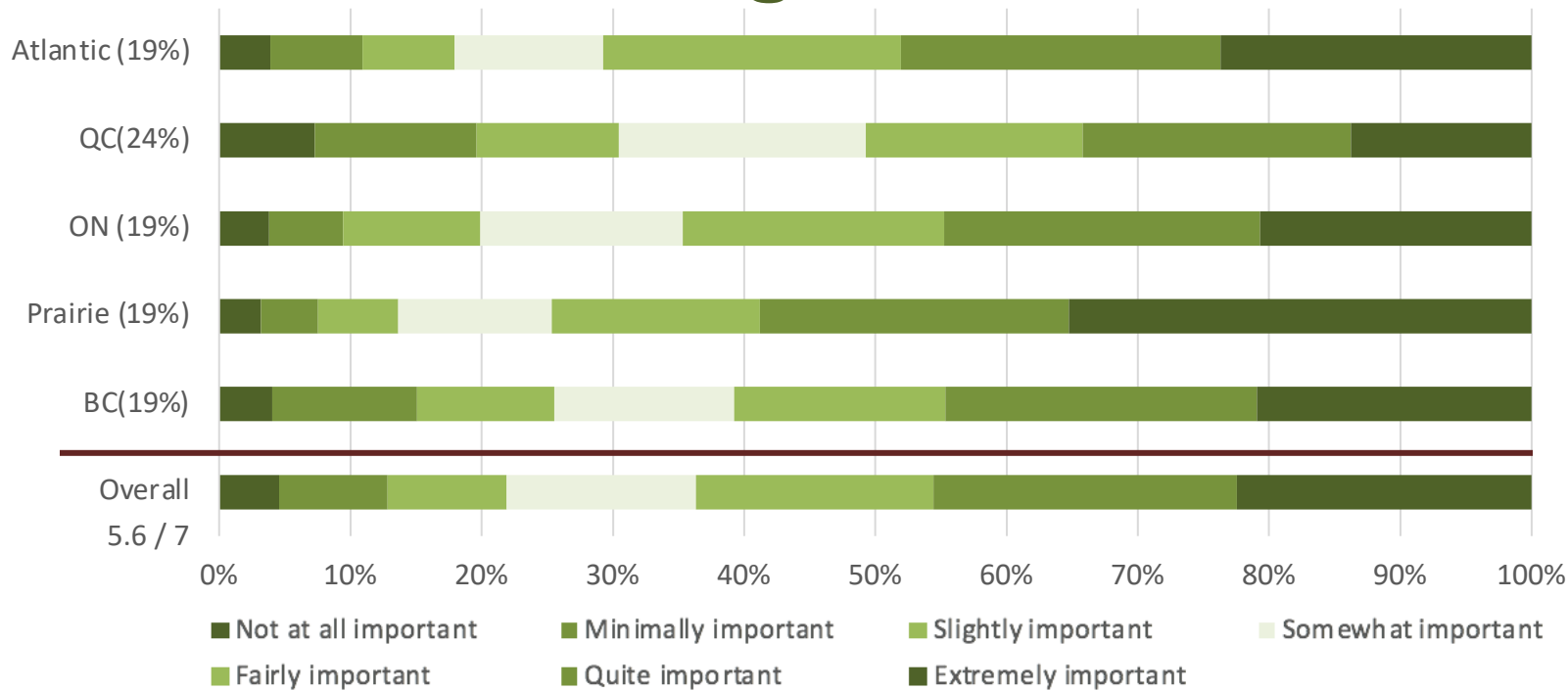
Statement: How important is the oil and gas sector to Canada's future economy?

Future Importance of Oil and Gas: Ideology



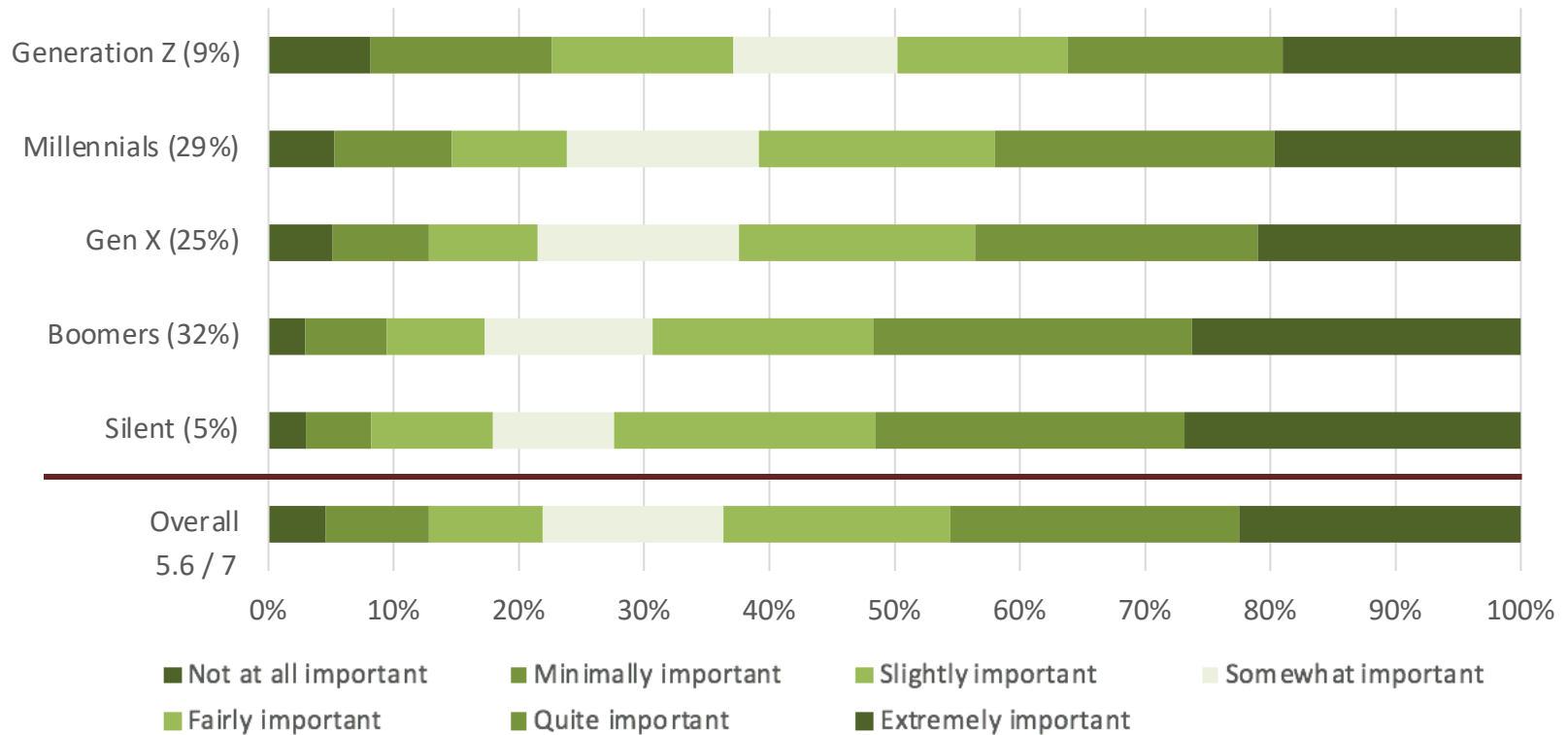
Statement: How important is the oil and gas sector to Canada's future economy?

Future Importance of Oil and Gas: Region



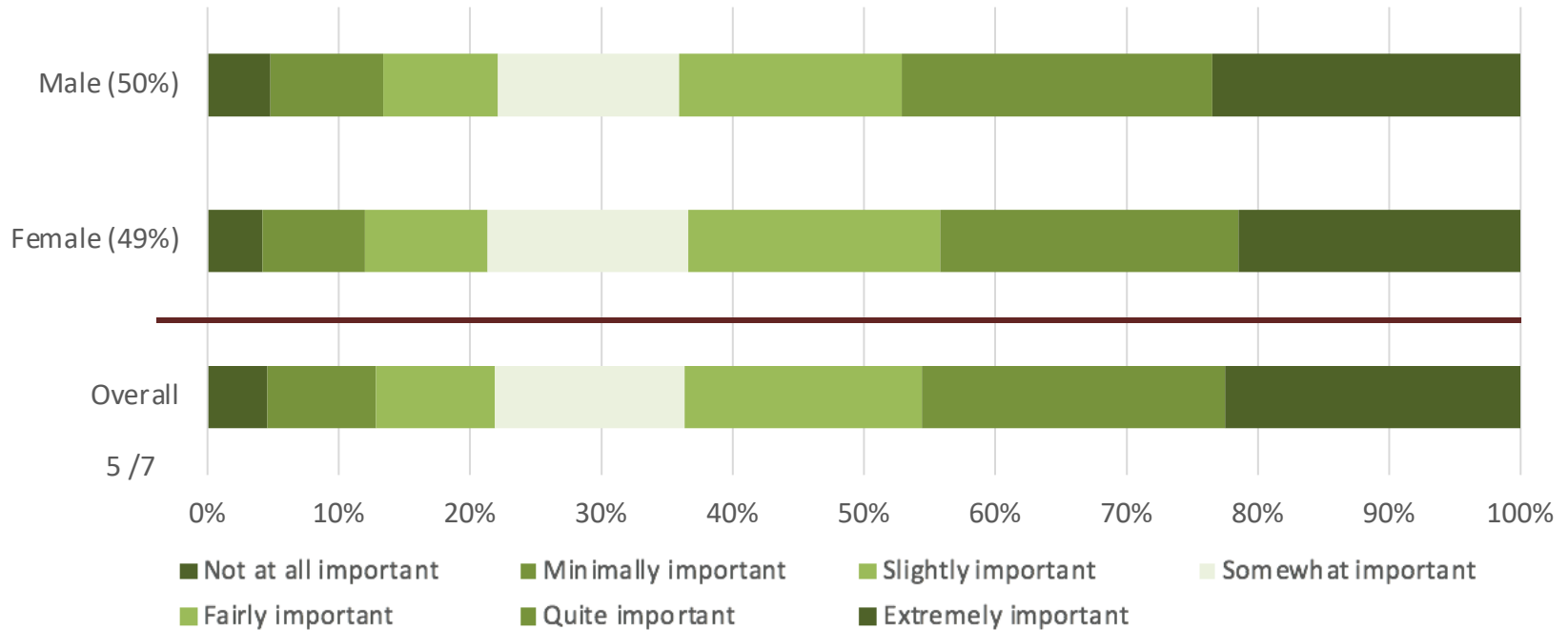
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Future Importance of Oil and Gas: Age



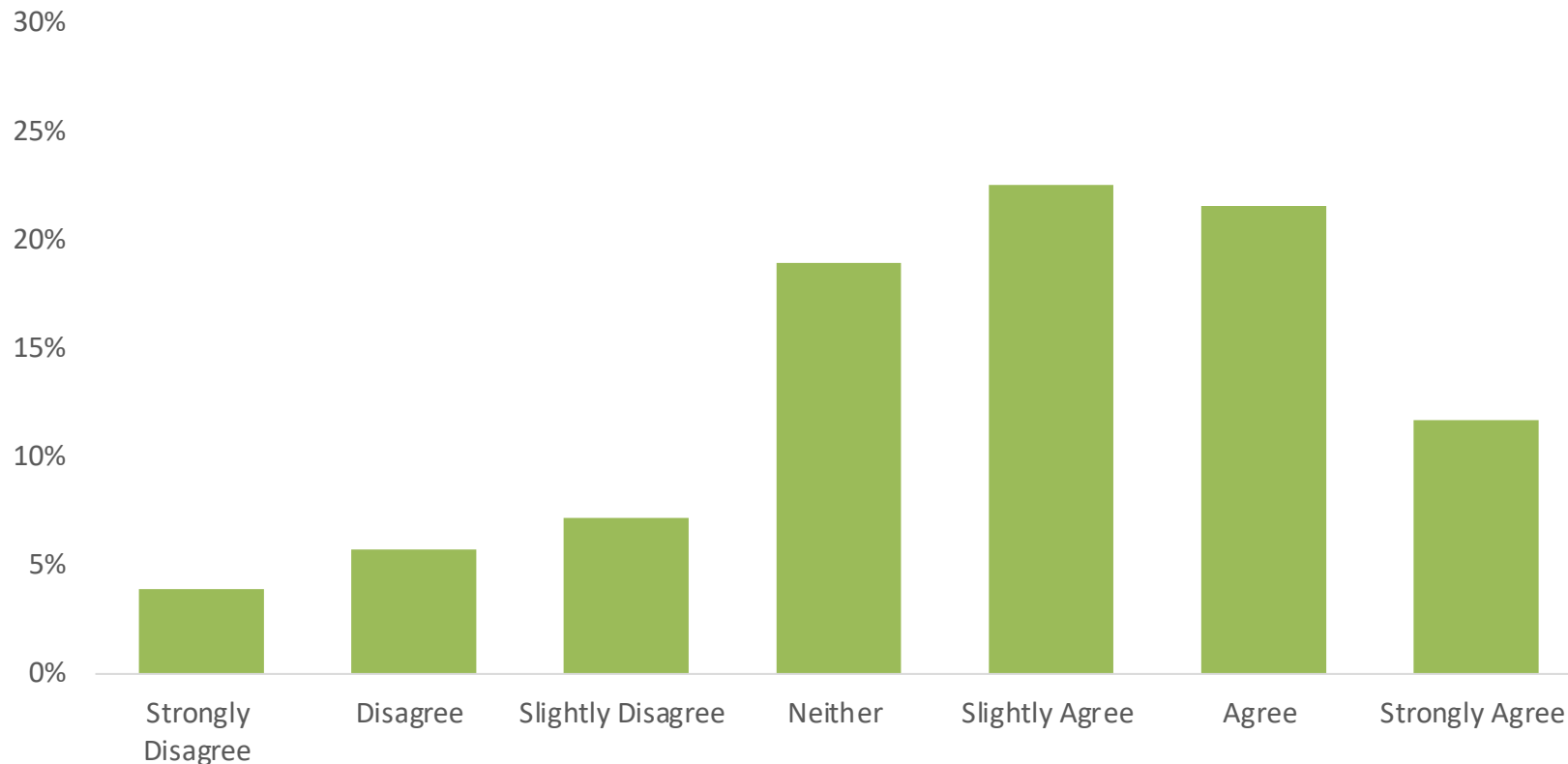
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Future Importance of Oil and Gas: Gender



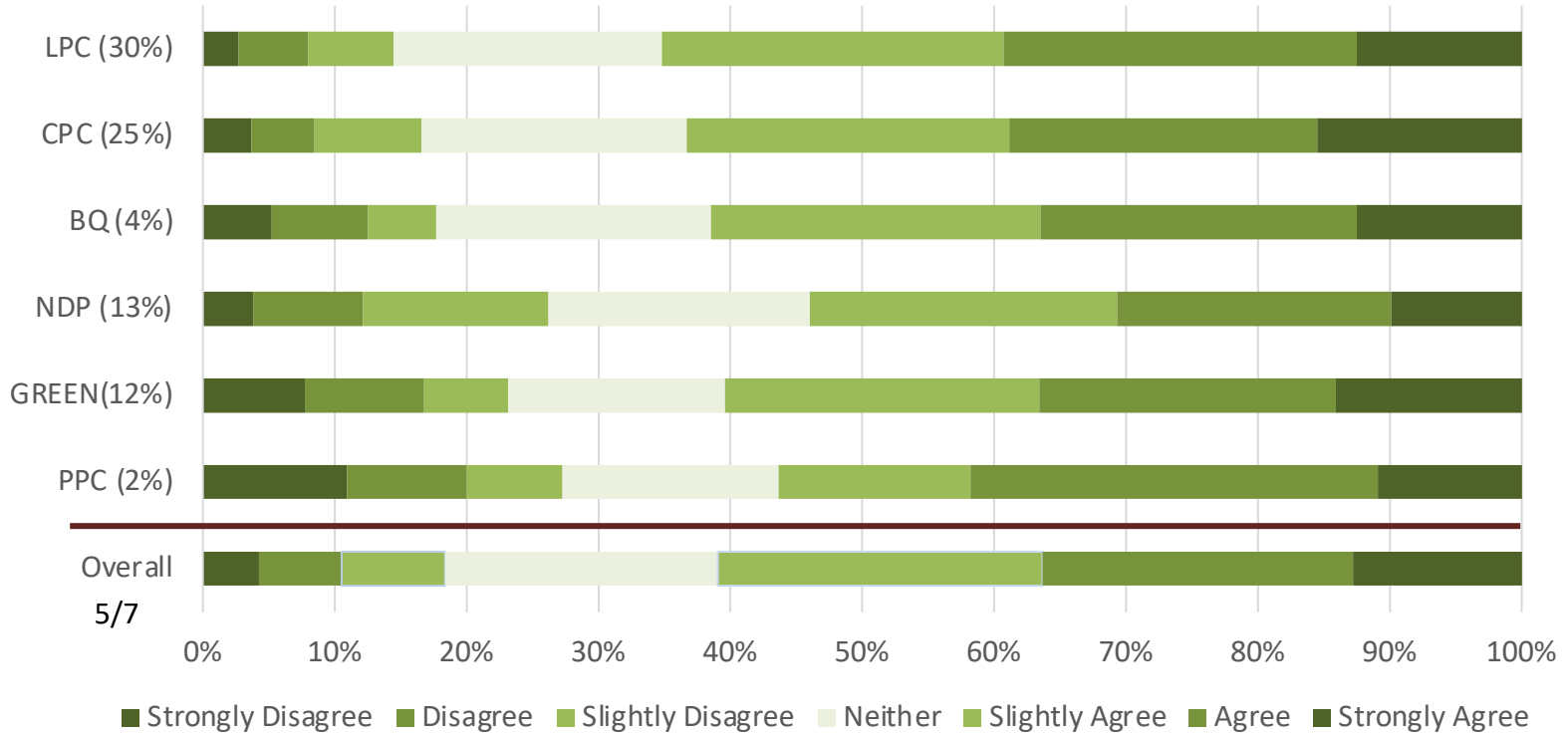
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Natural Gas Exports and Climate Change



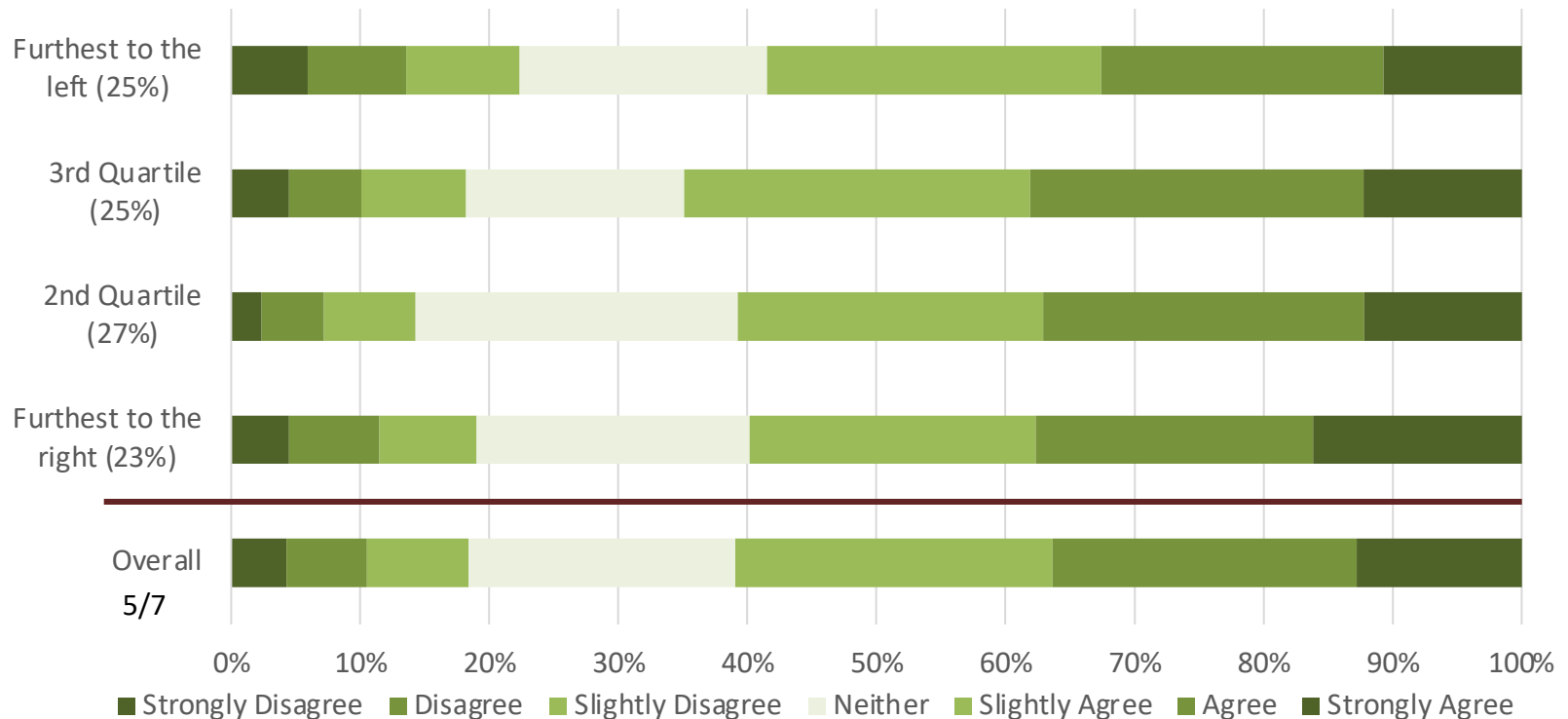
Statement: Exporting Canadian natural gas to countries that use more polluting energy like coal is one of the most important things Canada can do to address climate change

Natural Gas Exports: Party



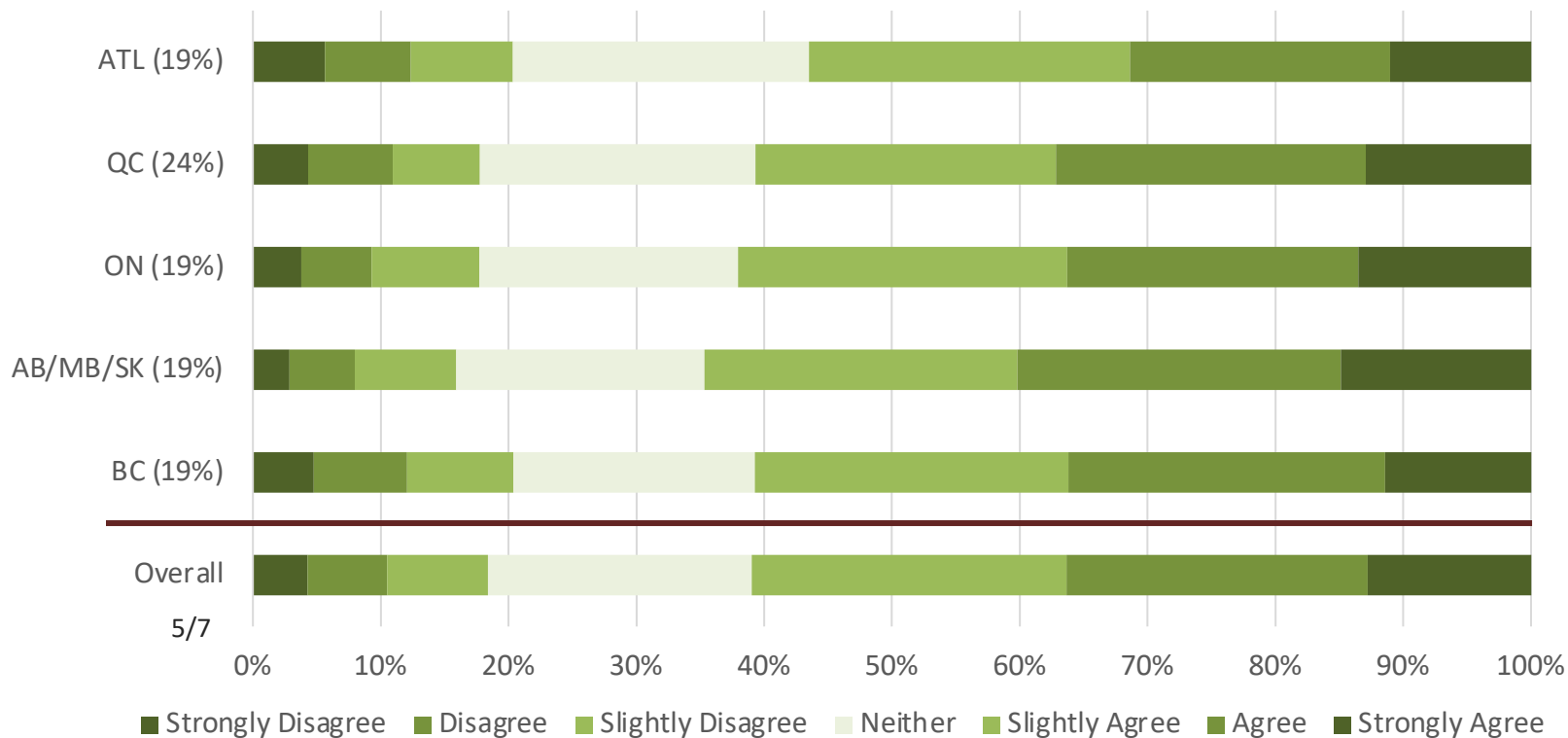
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Natural Gas Exports: Ideology



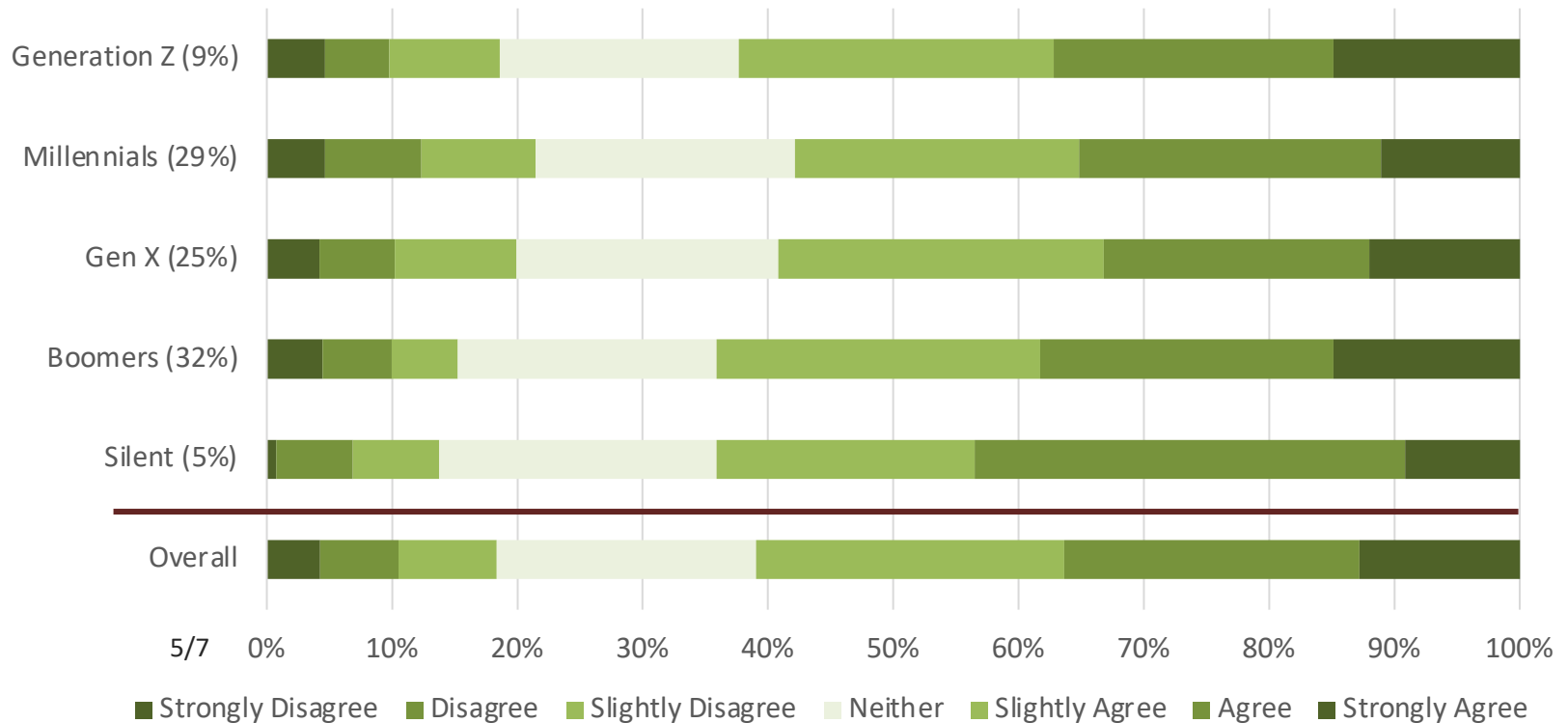
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Natural Gas Exports: Region



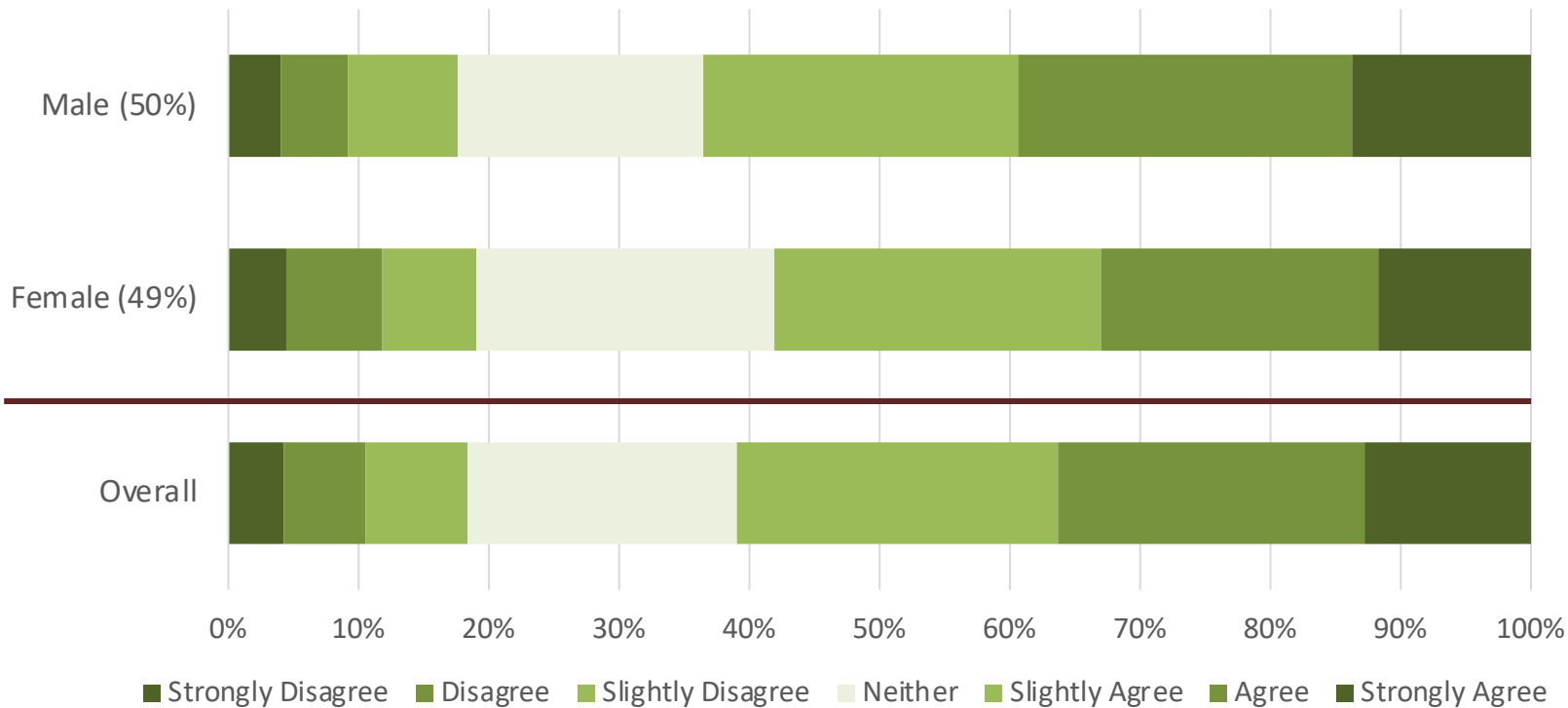
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Natural Gas Exports: Age



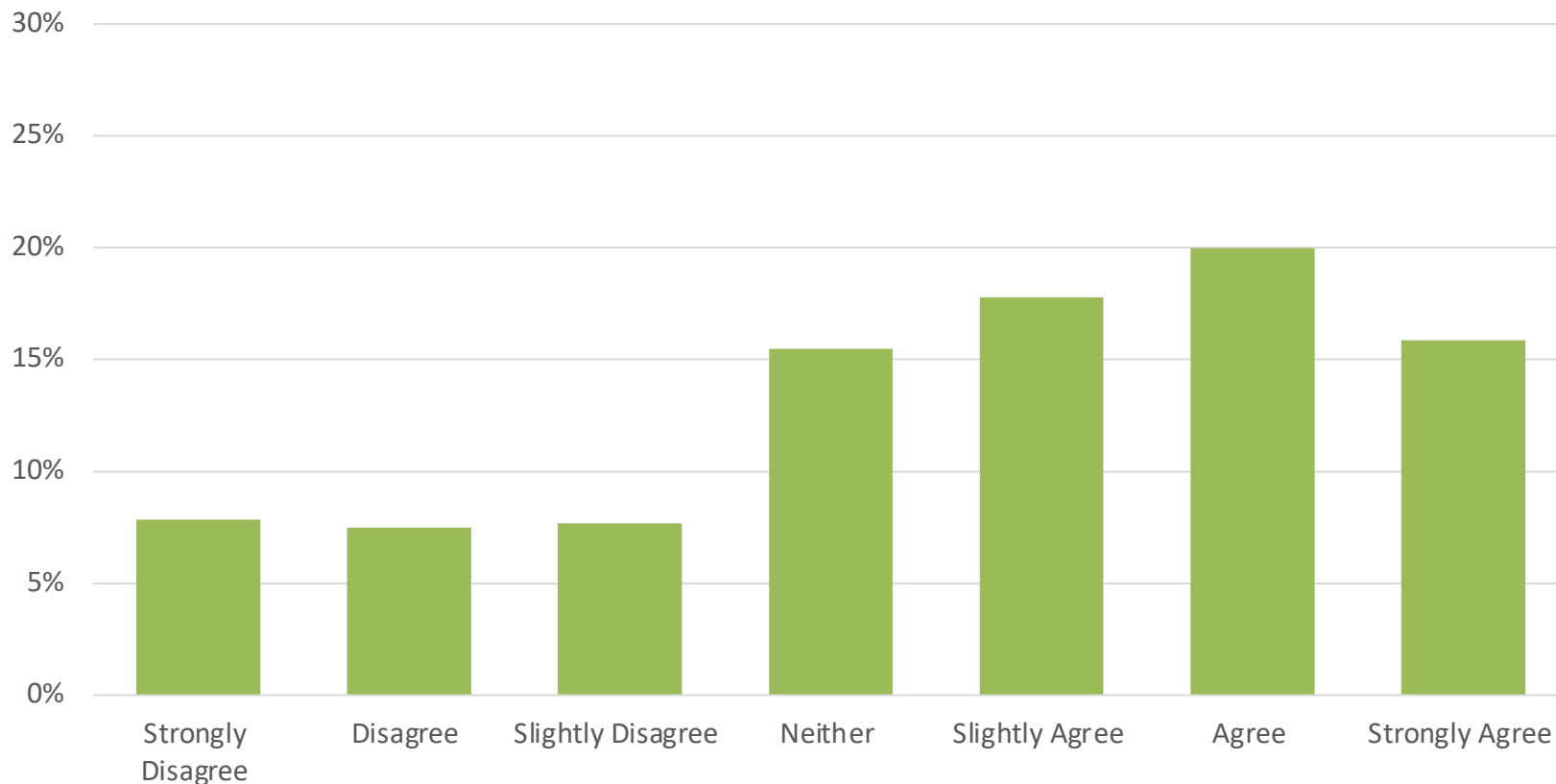
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Natural Gas Exports: Gender



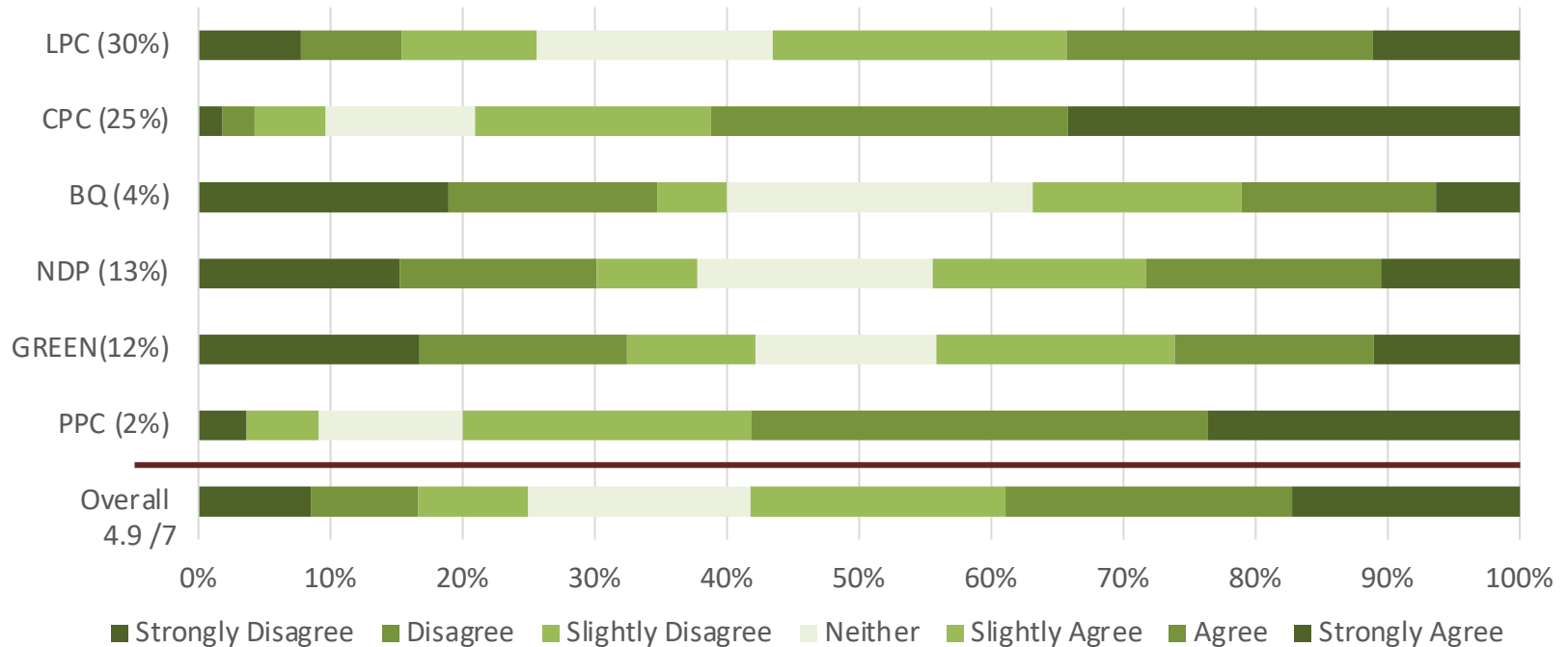
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Oil & Gas Production and Emissions



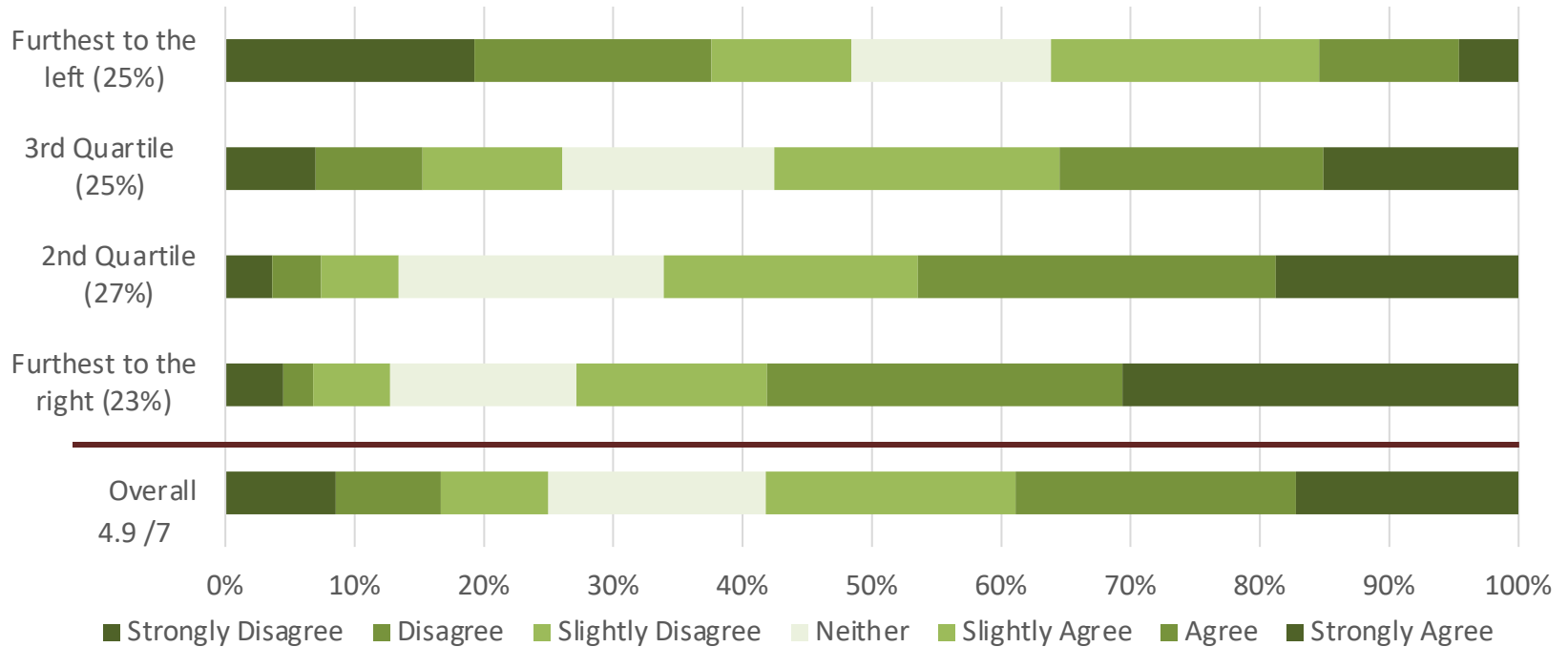
Statement: Canada should expand oil and gas production if it can produce its oil and gas with lower emissions than other countries

Oil & Gas Production and Emissions: Party



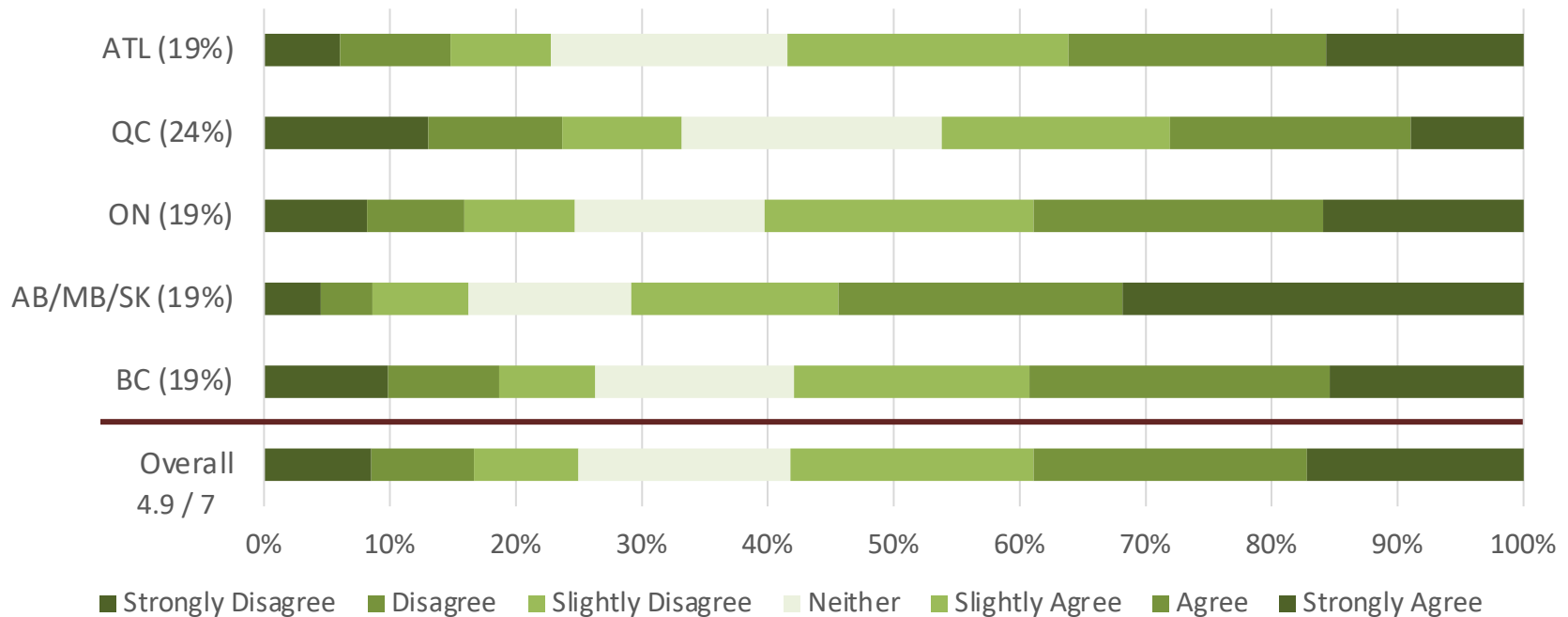
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Oil & Gas Production and Emissions: Ideology



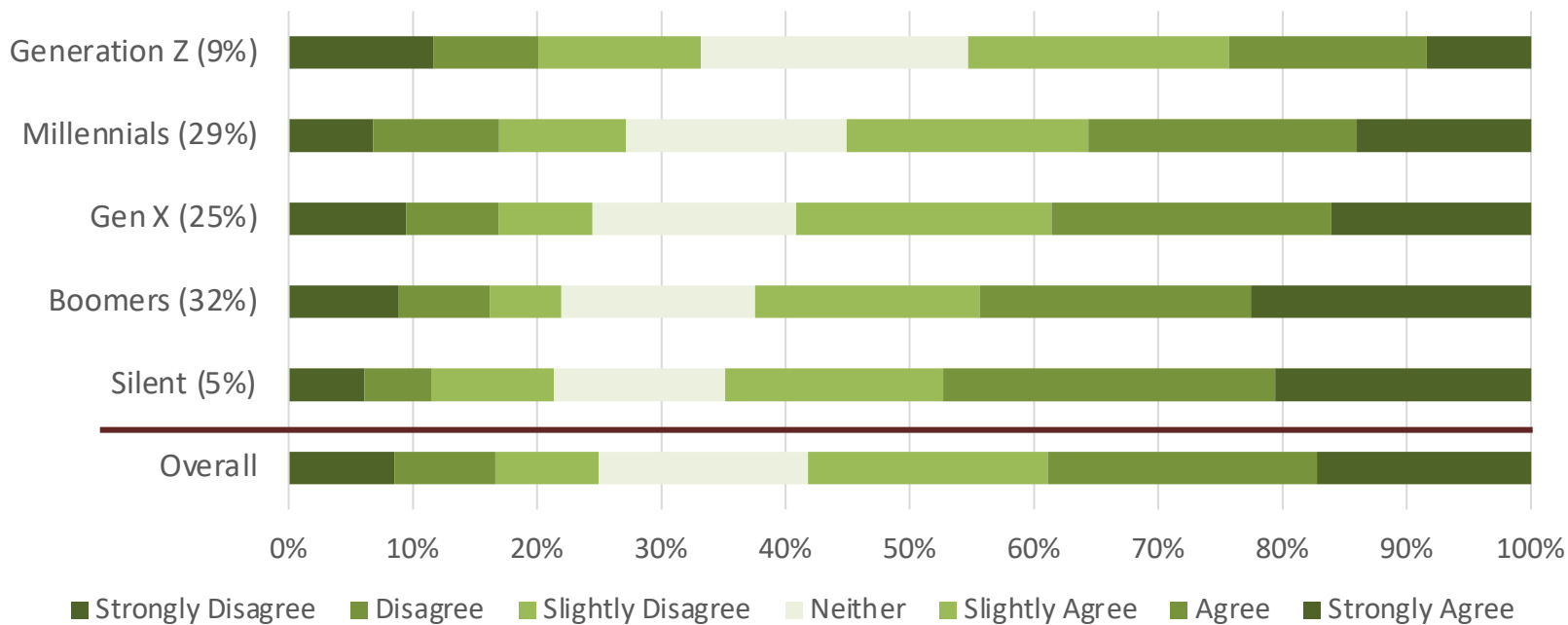
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Oil & Gas Production and Emissions: Region



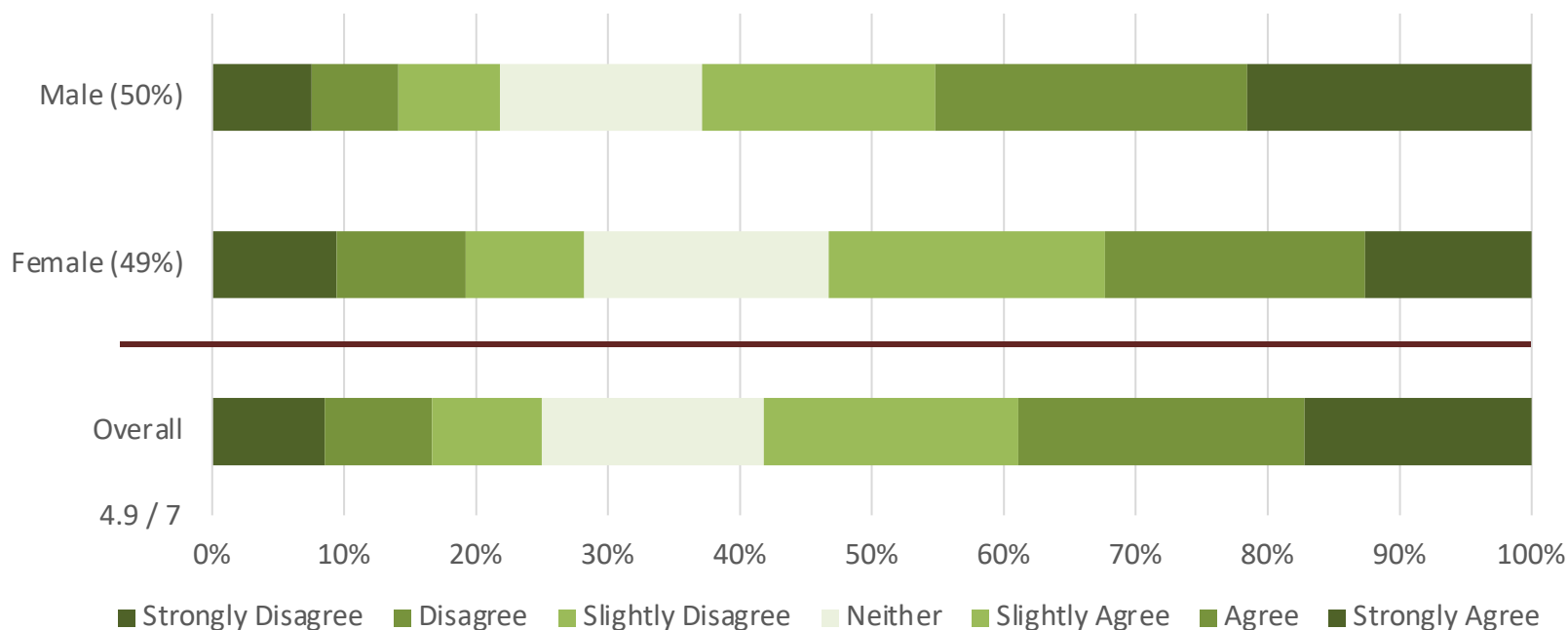
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Oil & Gas Production and Emissions: Age



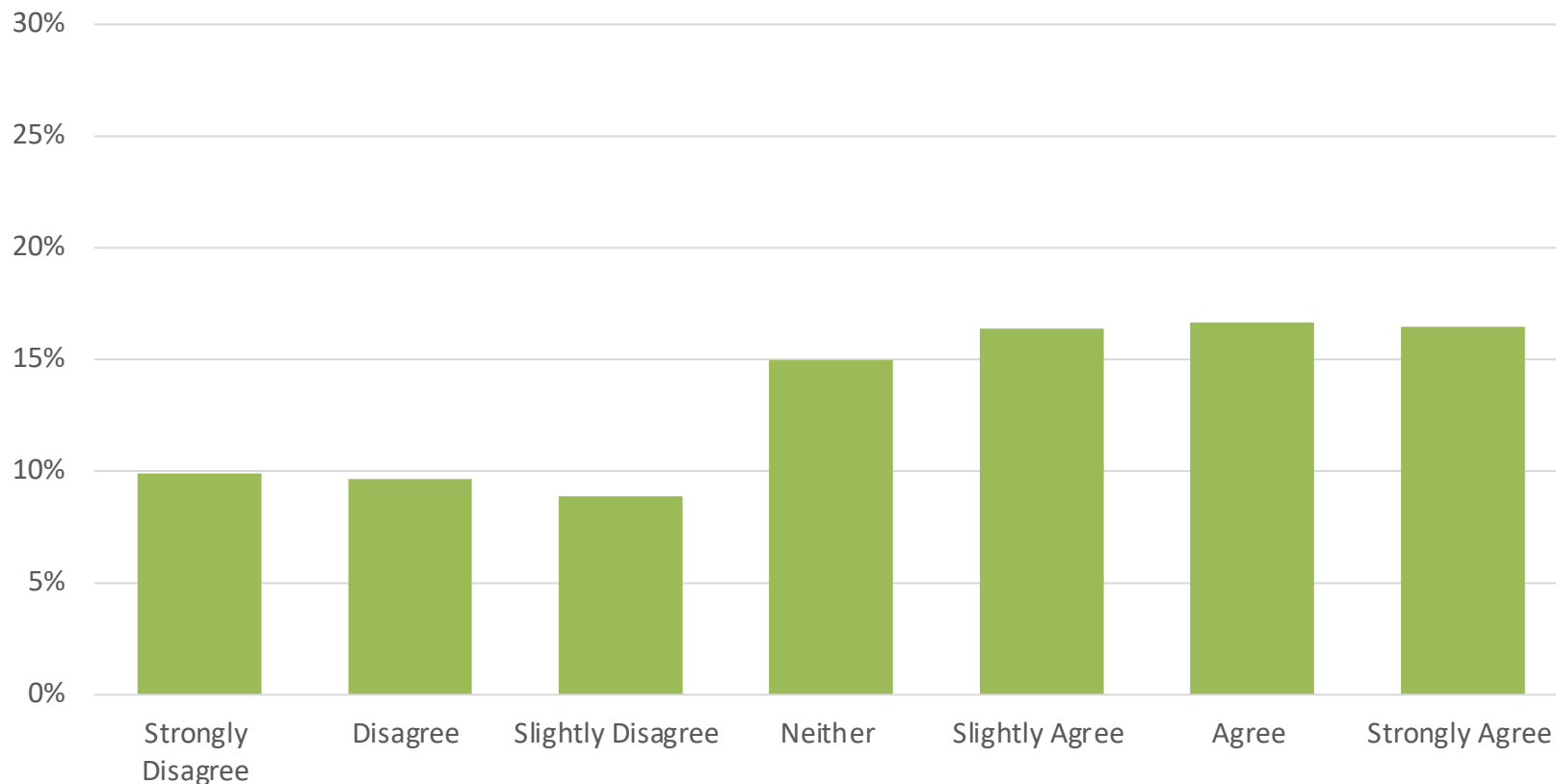
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Oil & Gas Production and Emissions: Gender



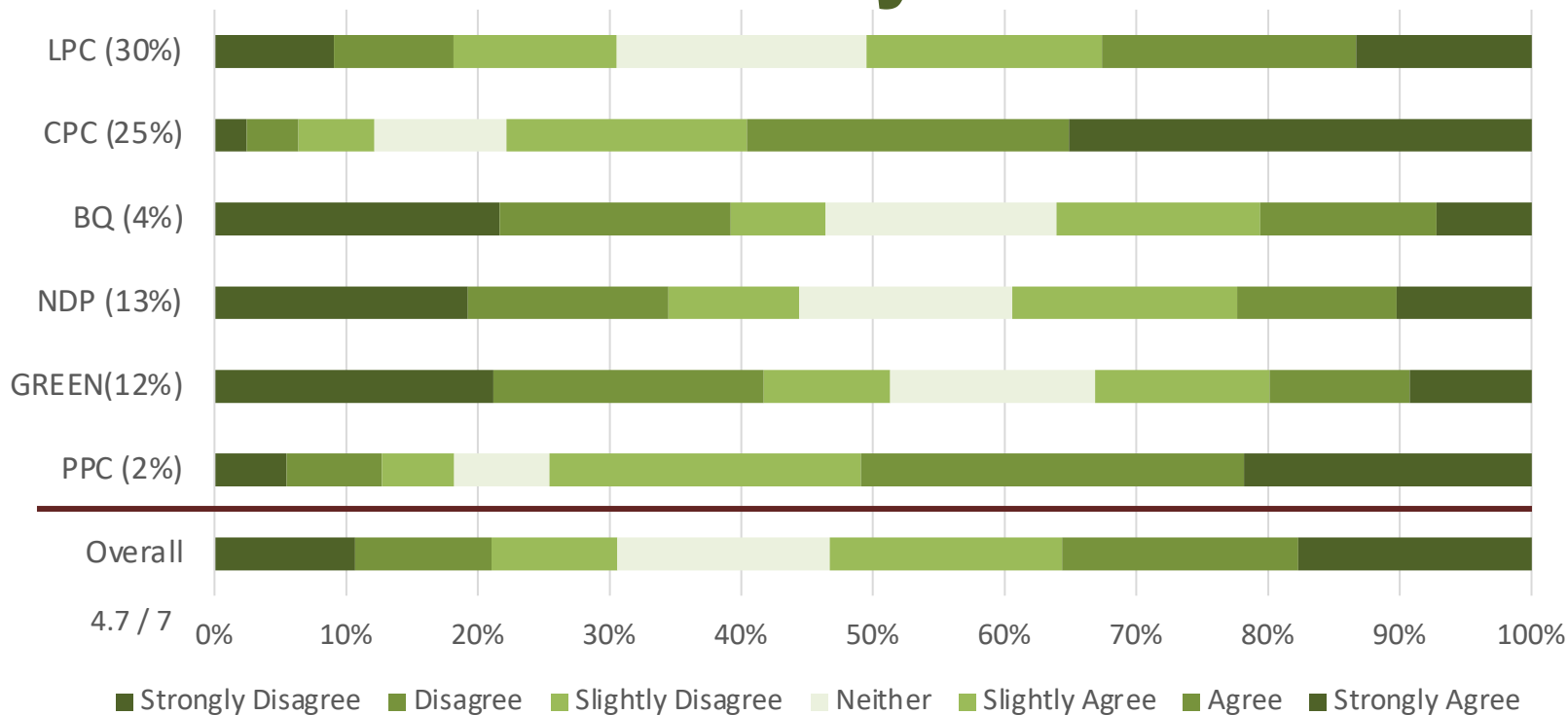
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Oil & Gas Exports and Global Demand



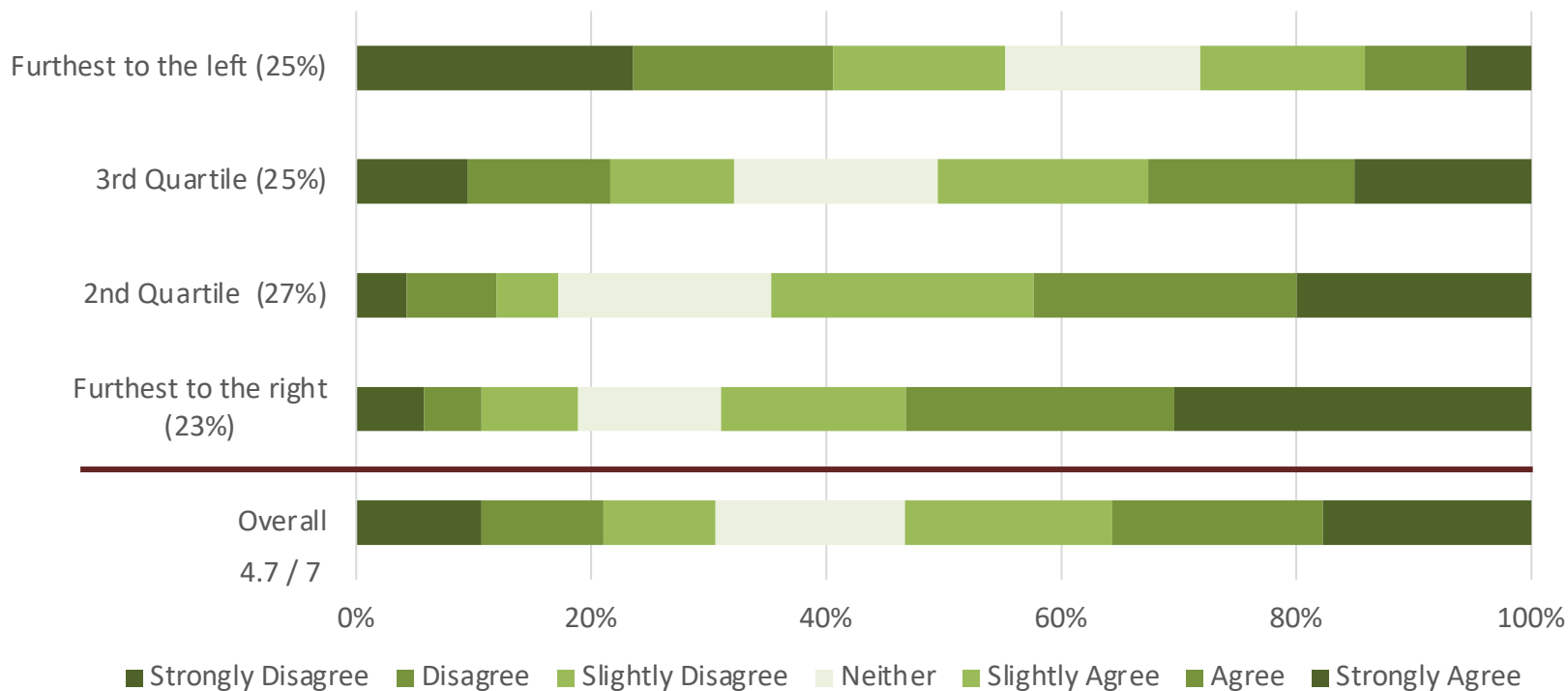
Statement: Since global demand for oil and gas is rising, Canada should expand production of oil and gas for export

Oil & Gas Exports and Global Demand: Party



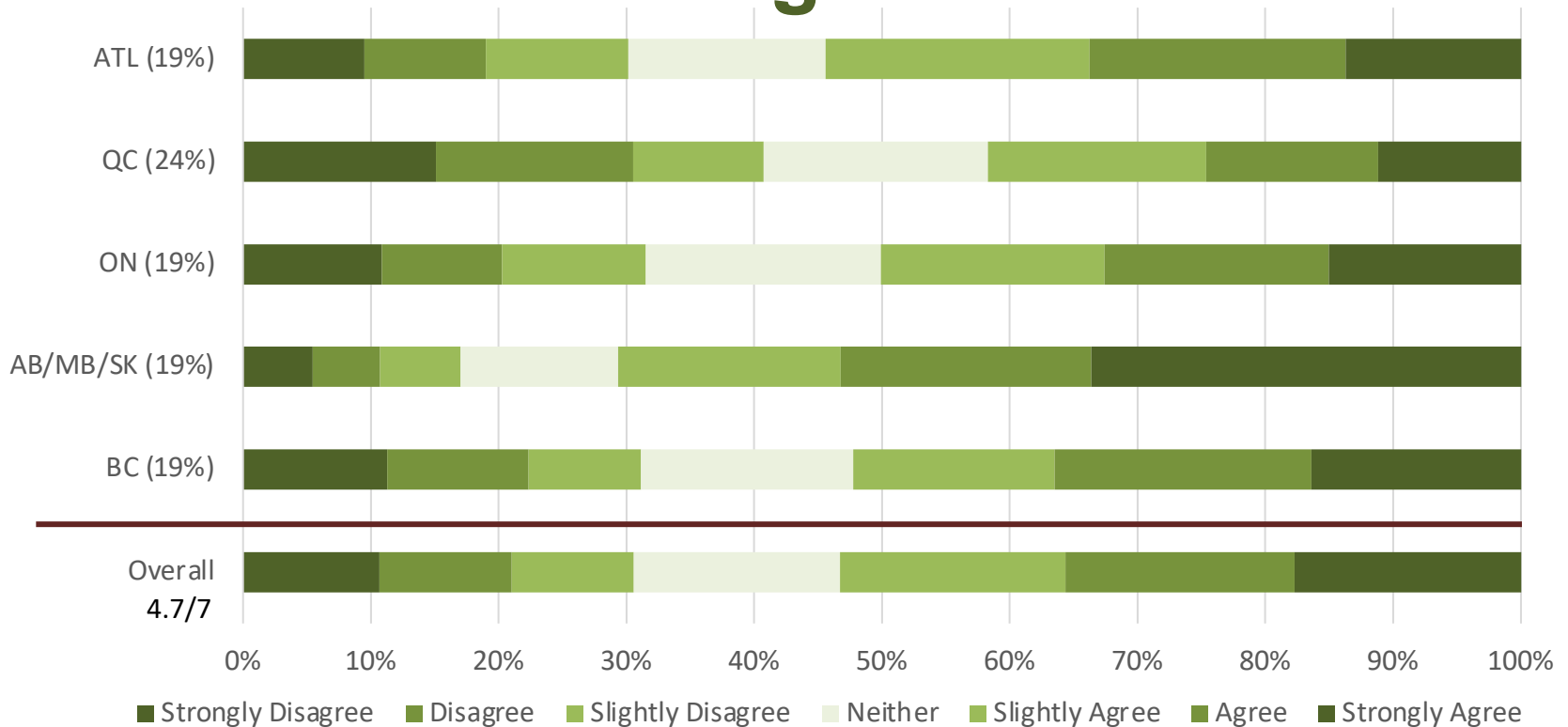
Statement: Since global demand for oil and gas is rising, Canada should expand production of oil and gas for export

Oil & Gas Exports and Global Demand: Ideology



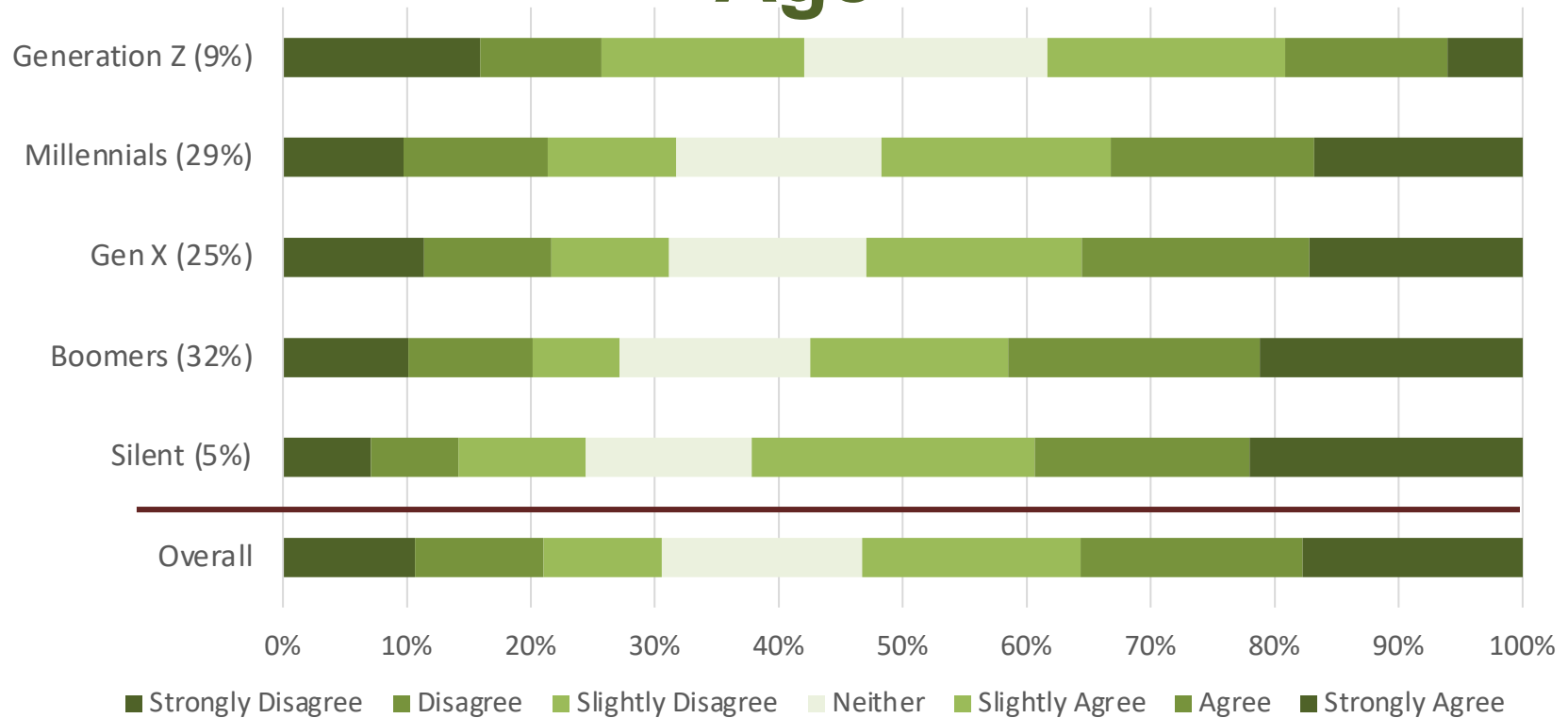
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Oil & Gas Exports and Global Demand: Region



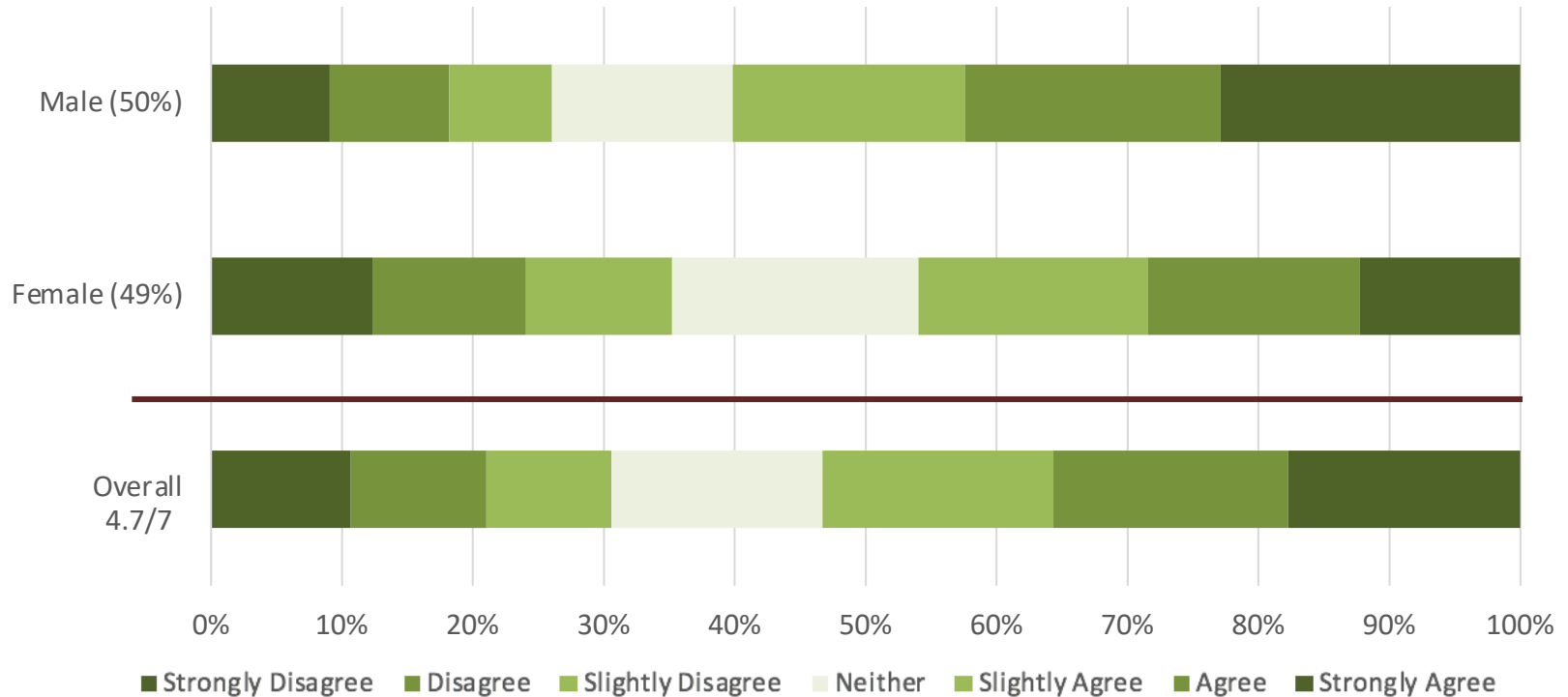
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Oil & Gas Exports and Global Demand: Age



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



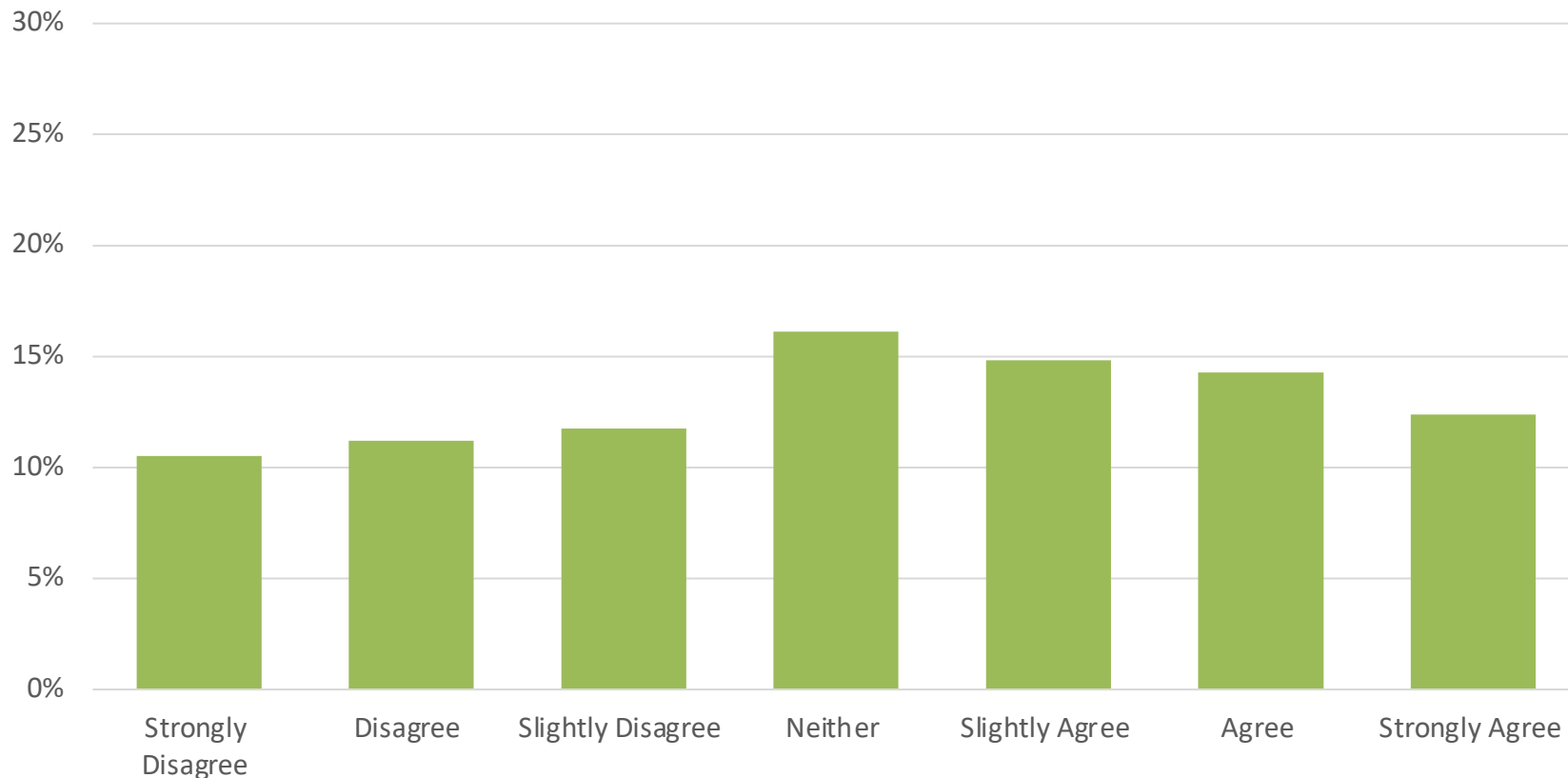
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Phase-out, Fairness and Retraining



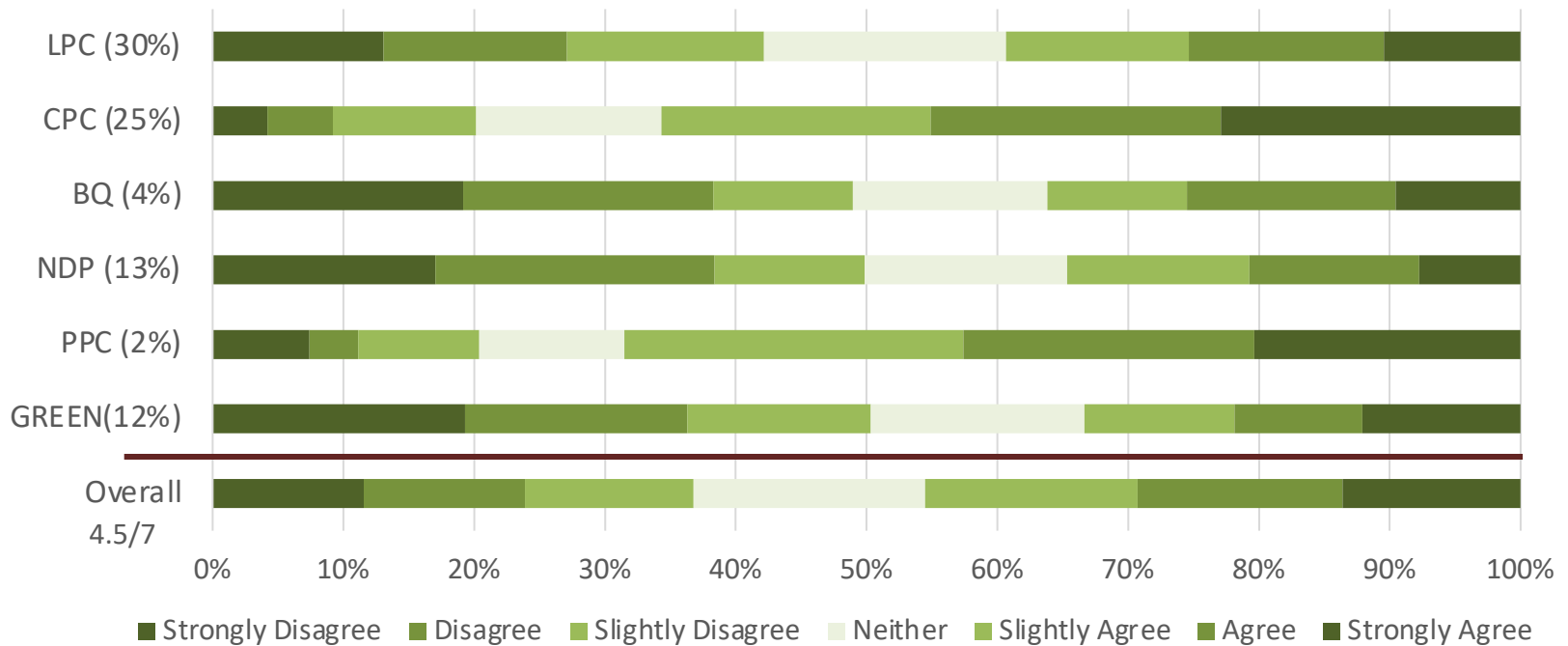
Reducing the economic size of the oil and gas sectors could have significant effects on many Canadians. Positive Energy asked respondents if they think that phasing out oil and gas is necessary or whether technology will reduce emissions. We also asked whether phasing out oil and gas was fair to producing provinces, and whether governments should invest to retrain workers who lose their jobs as Canada addresses climate change.

Necessity of Phasing Out Oil & Gas



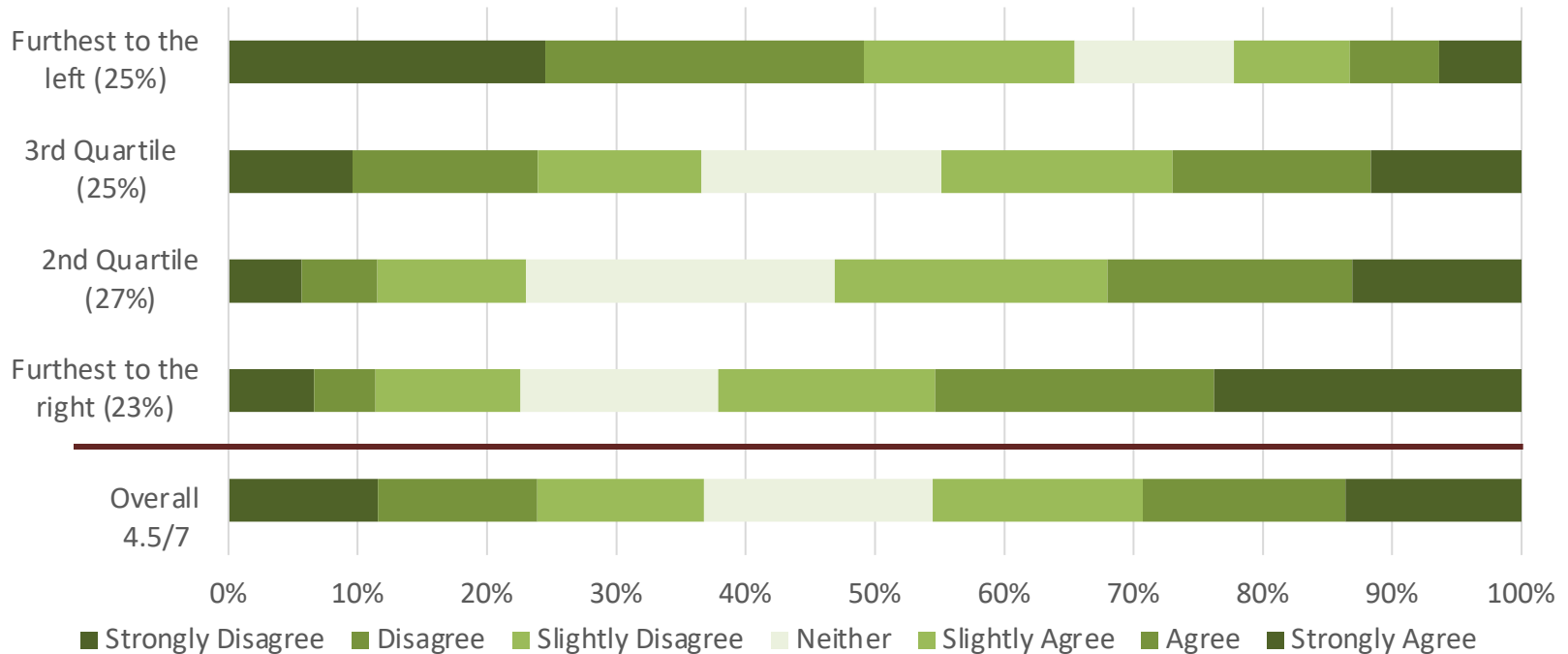
Statement: Phasing out oil and gas production and consumption is unnecessary because new technologies will dramatically reduce emissions from oil and gas

Necessity of Phasing Out Oil & Gas: Party



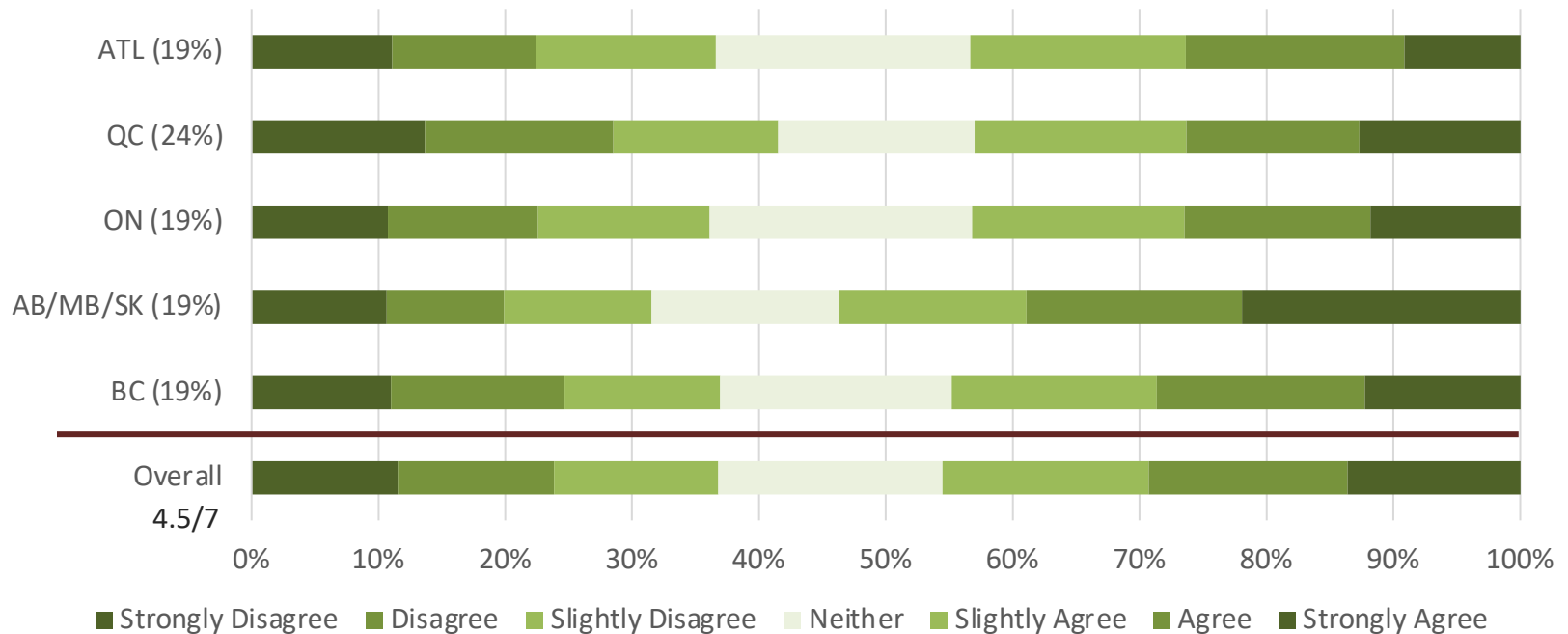
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Necessity of Phasing Out Oil & Gas: Ideology



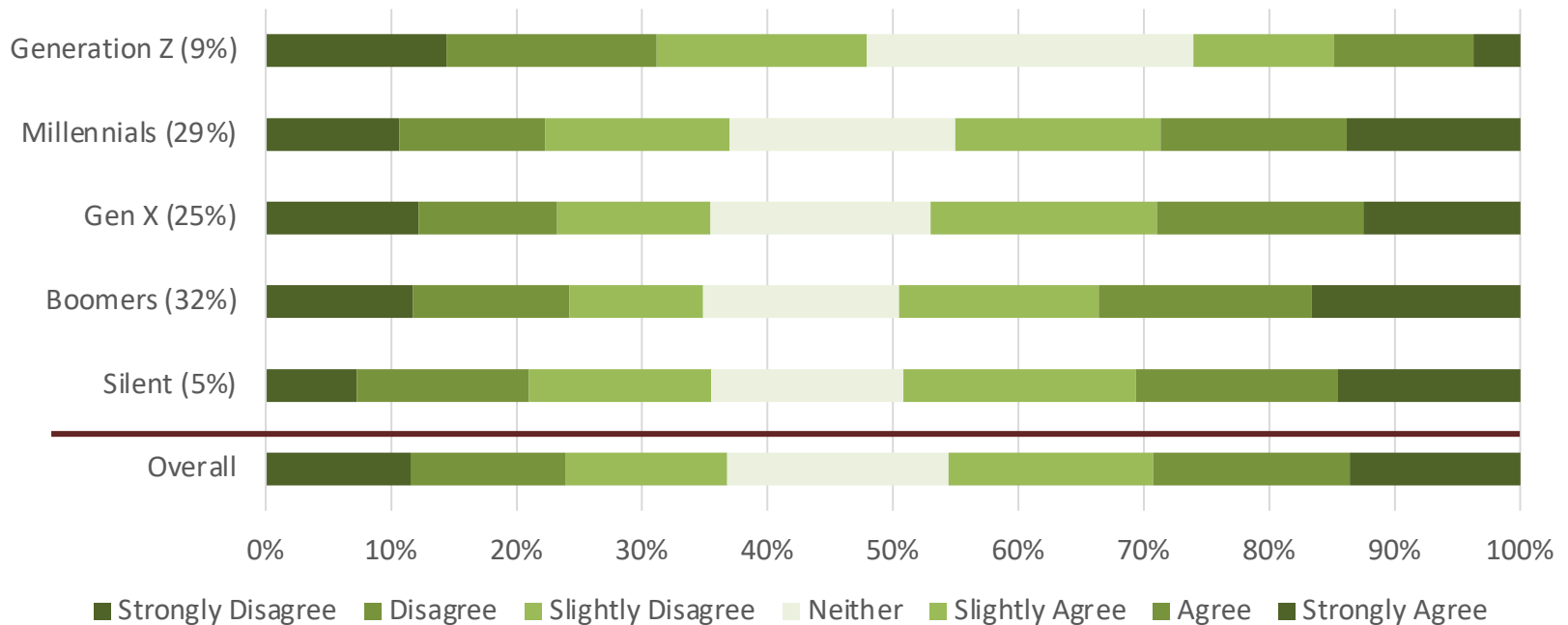
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Necessity of Phasing Out Oil & Gas: Region



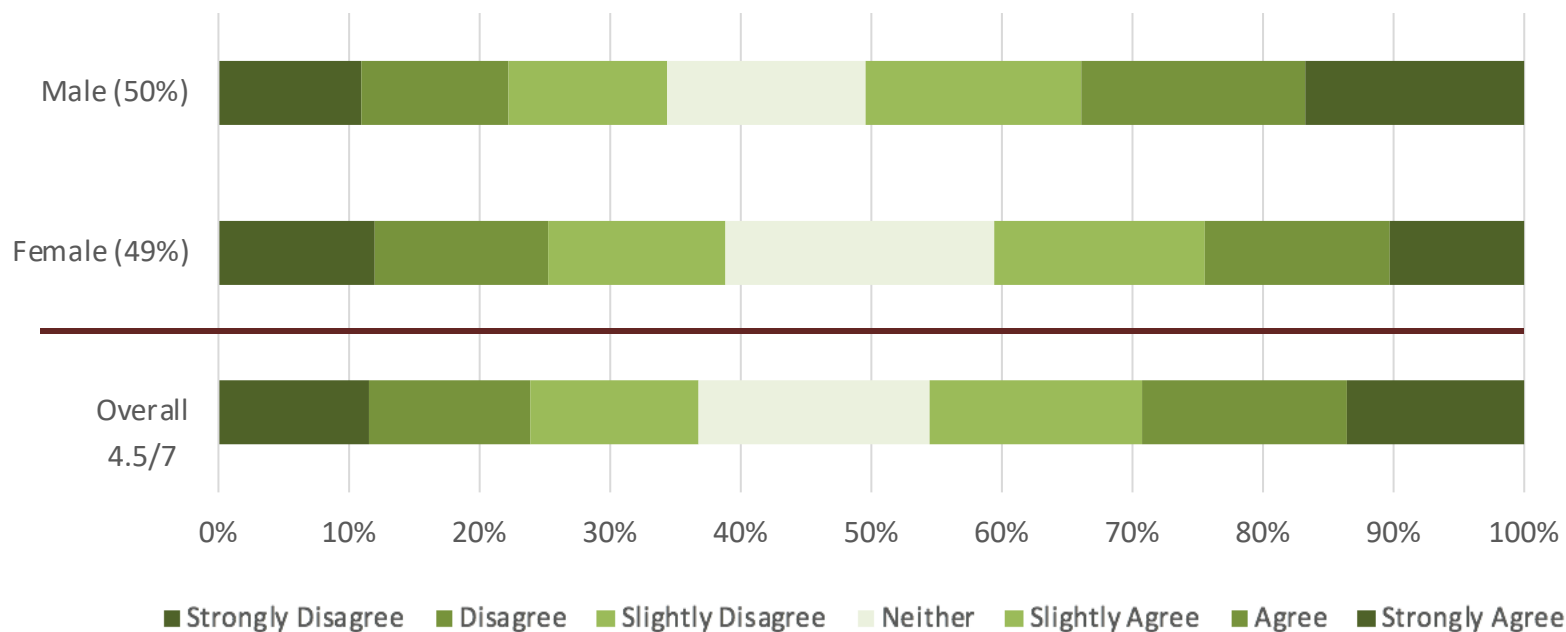
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Necessity of Phasing Out Oil & Gas: Age



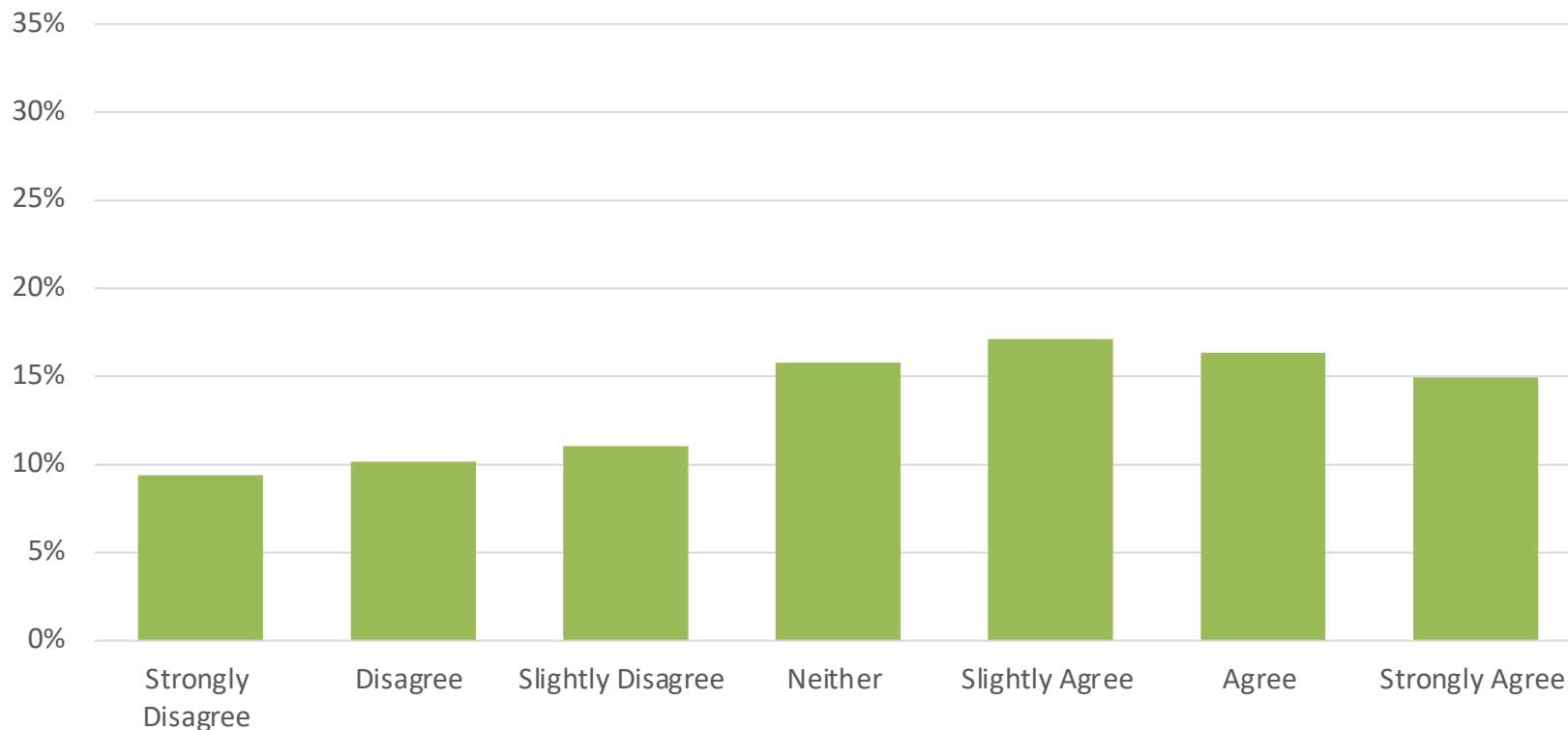
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Necessity of Phasing Out Oil & Gas: Gender



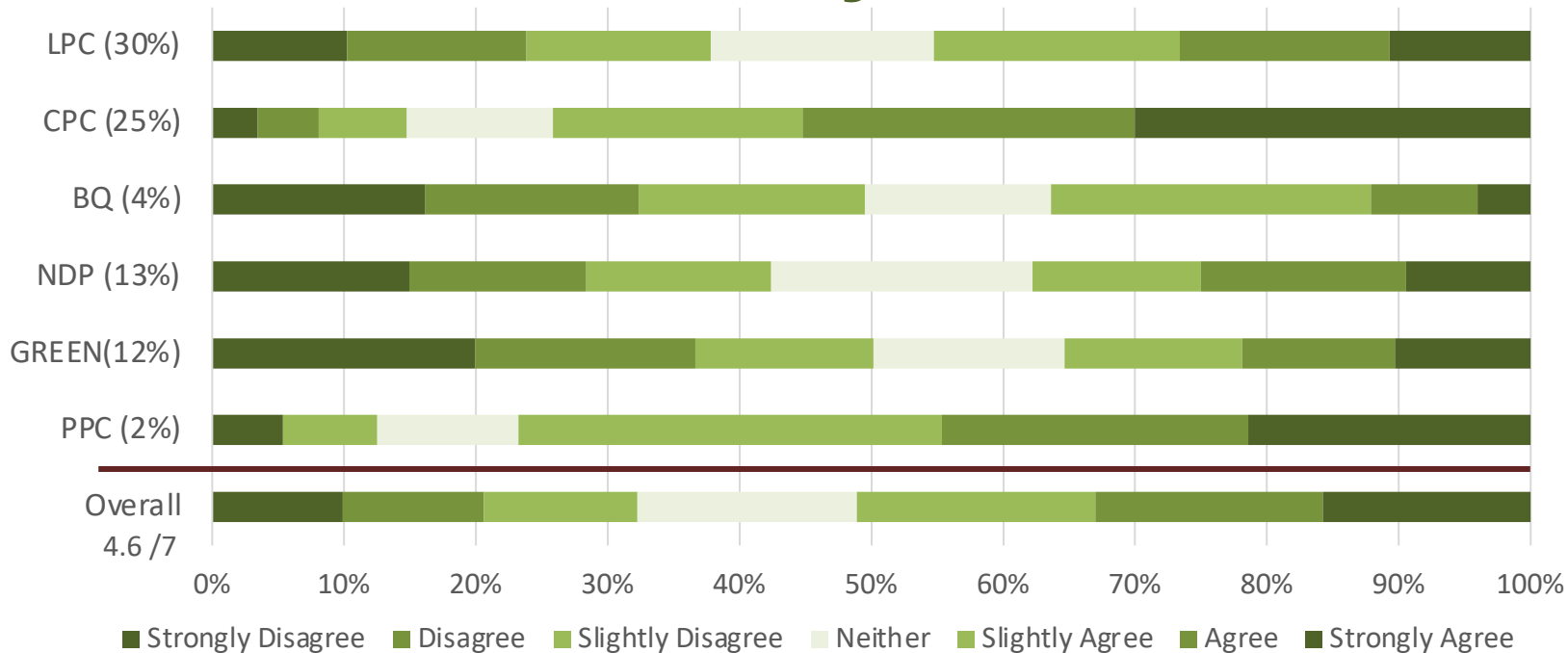
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Fairness of Phasing Out Oil & Gas



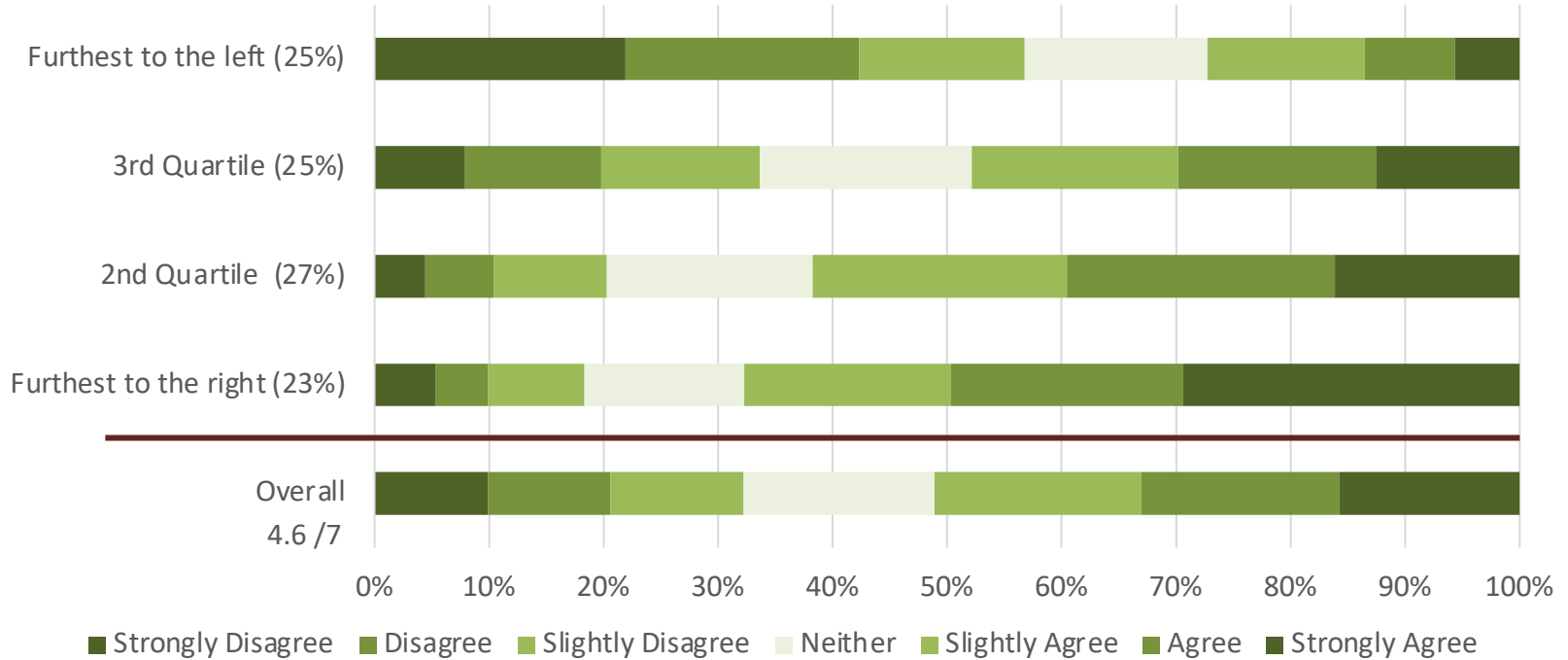
Statement: Phasing out oil and gas production is unfair to people in provinces that produce it

Fairness of Phasing Out Oil & Gas: Party



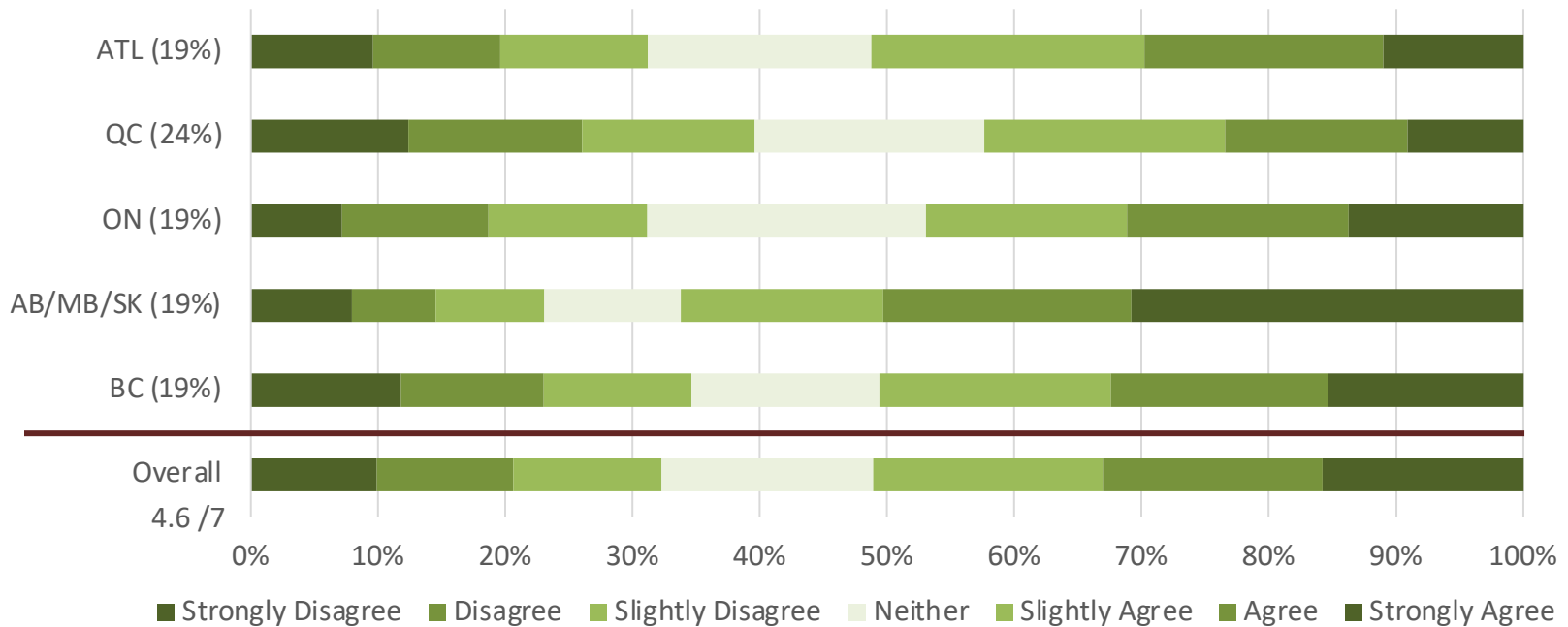
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Fairness of Phasing Out Oil & Gas: Ideology



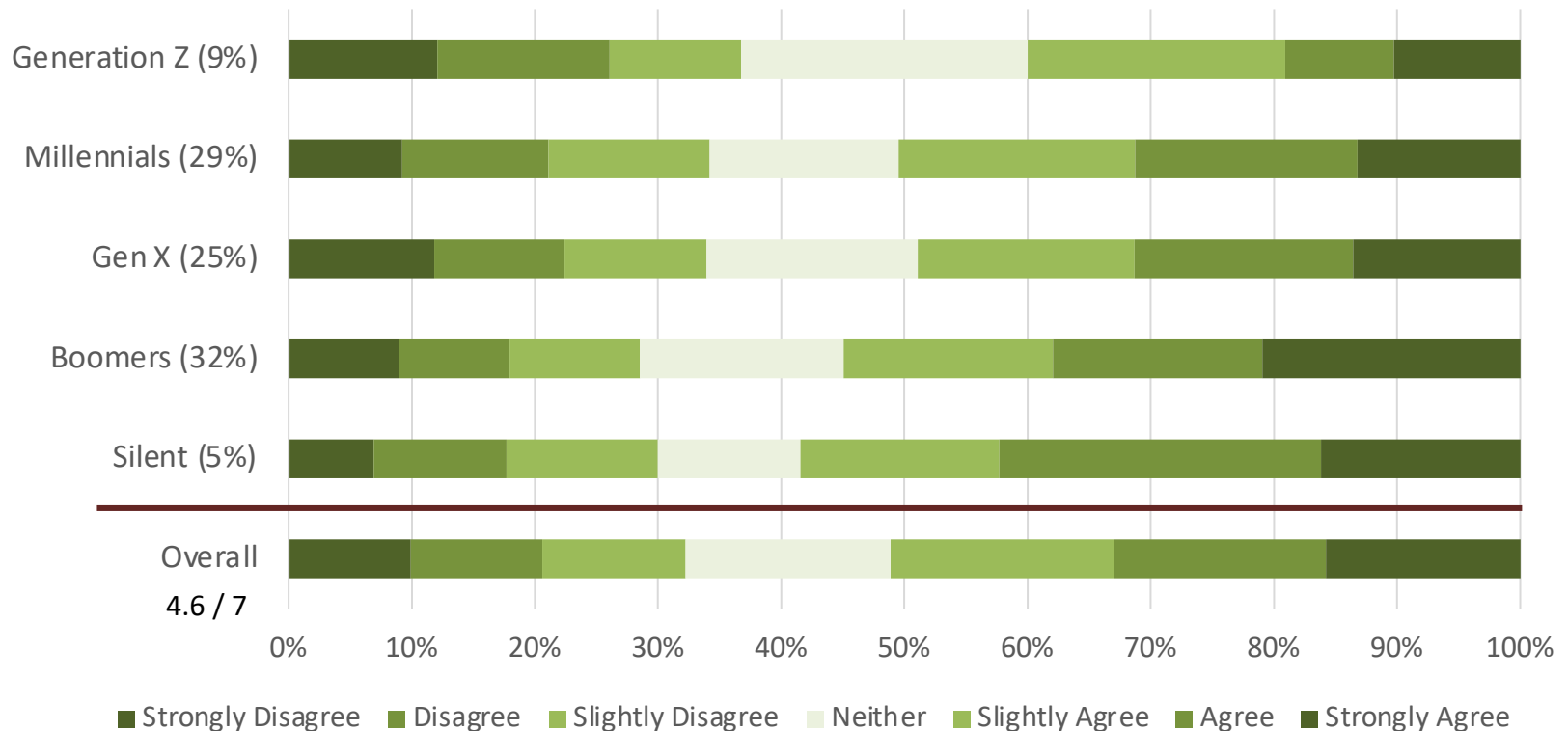
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Fairness of Phasing Out Oil & Gas: Region



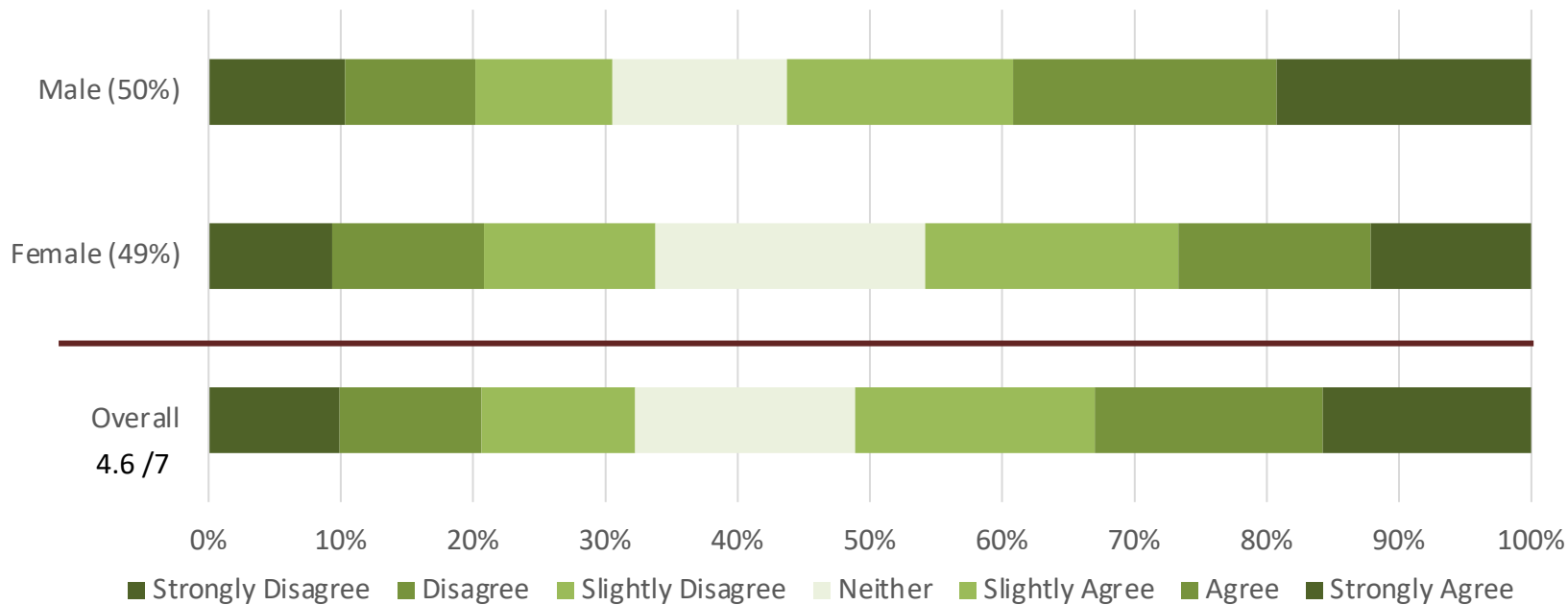
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Fairness of Phasing Out Oil & Gas: Age



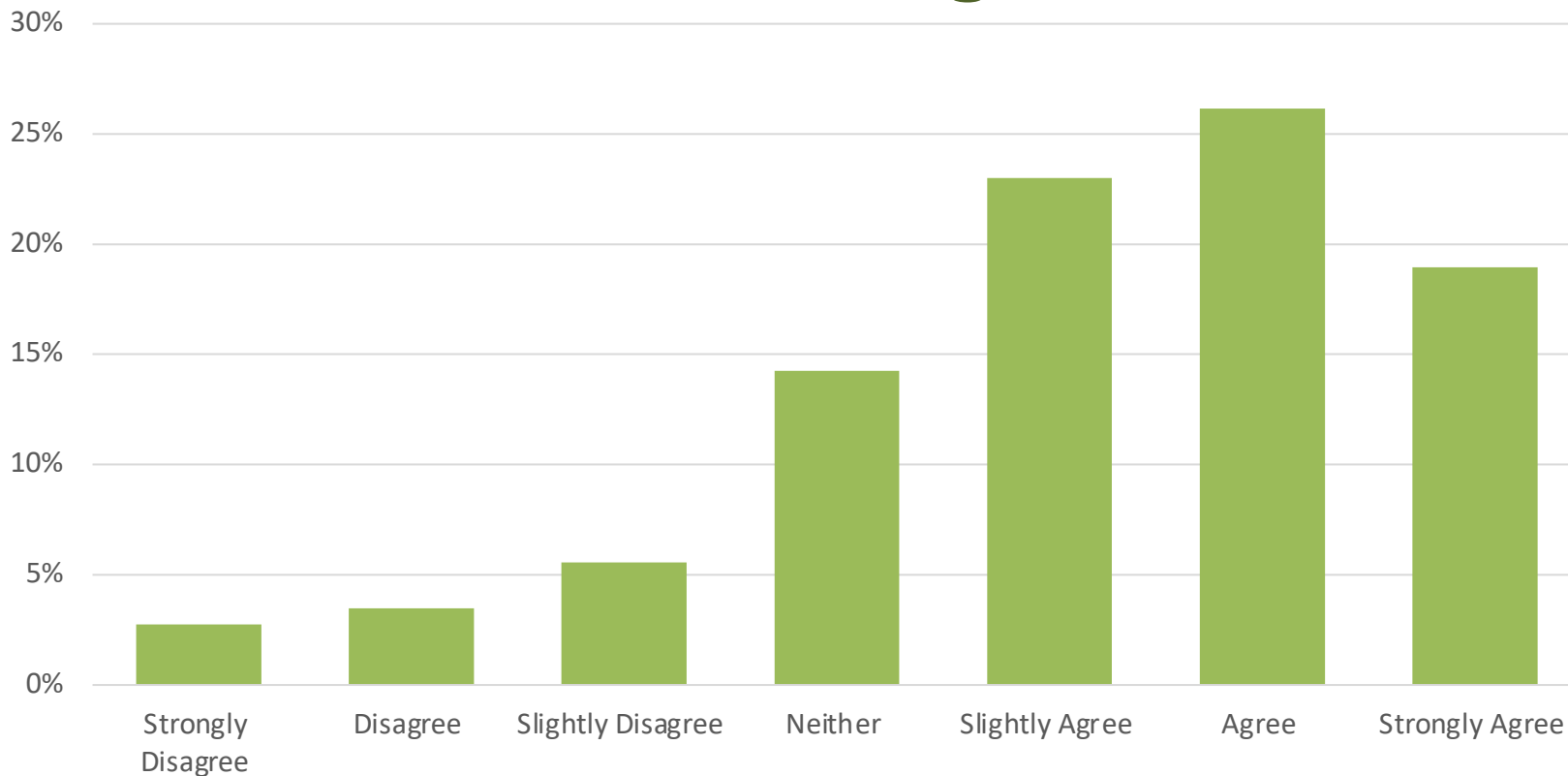
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Fairness of Phasing Out Oil & Gas: Gender



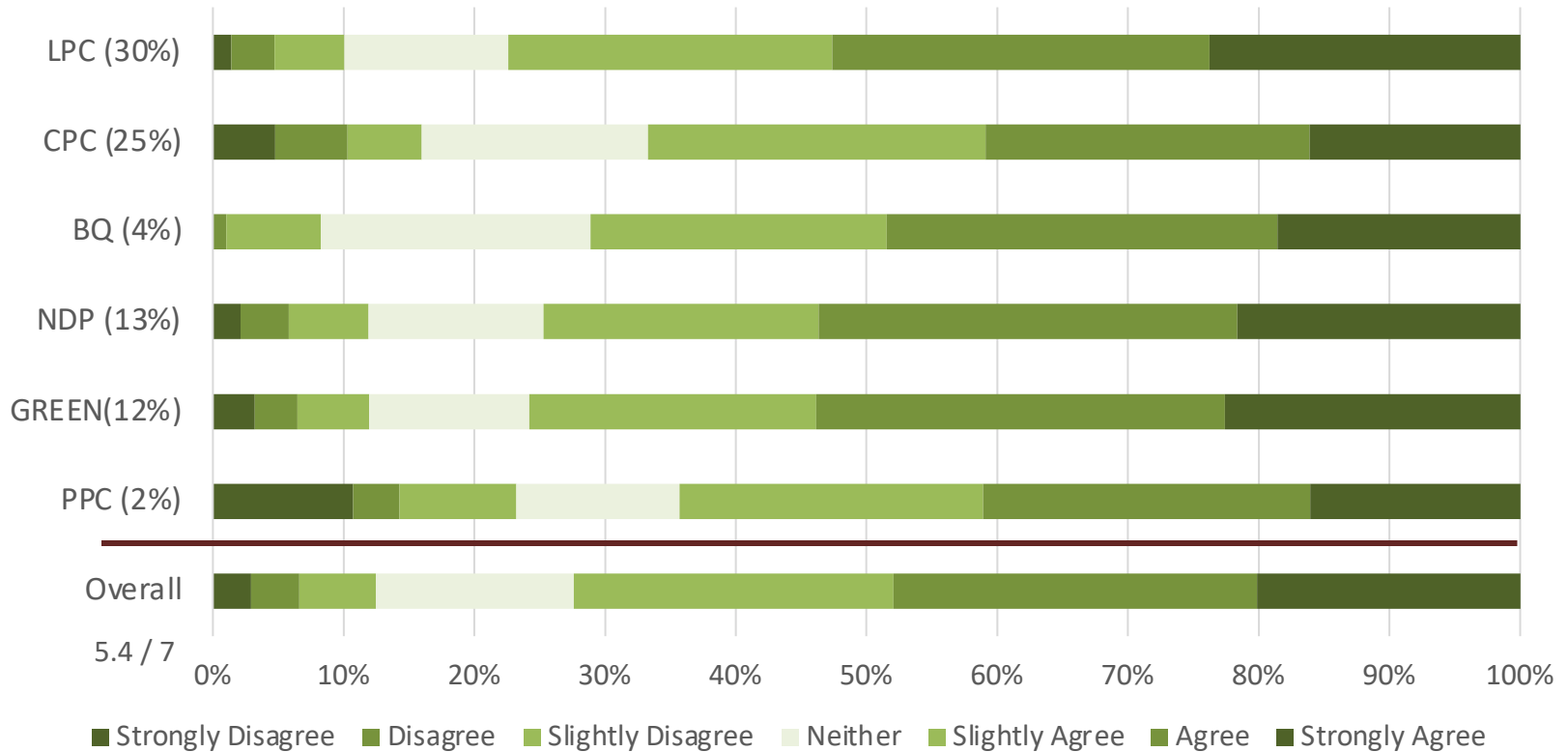
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Retraining



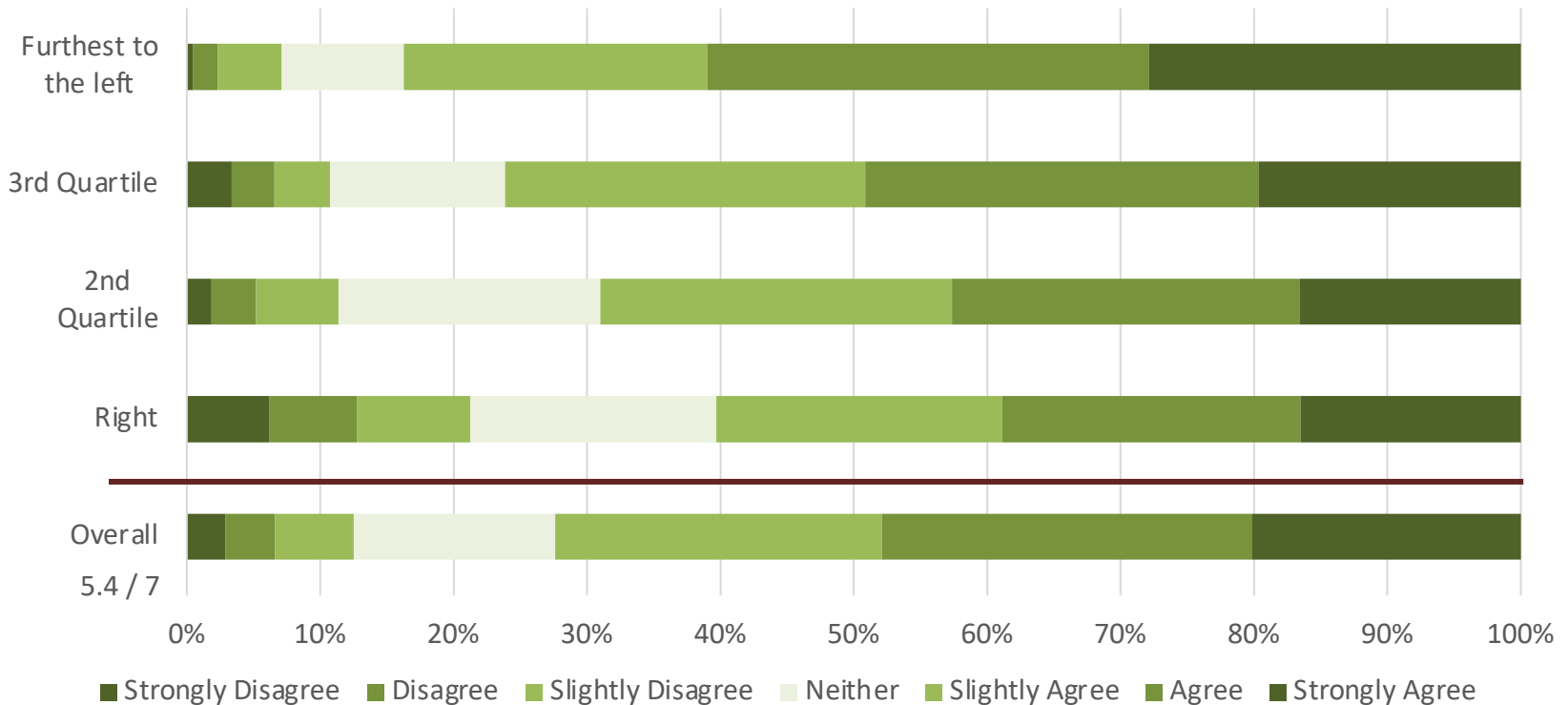
Statement: Canada needs to invest tax dollars into retraining workers who may lose their jobs as the country addresses climate change

Retraining: Party



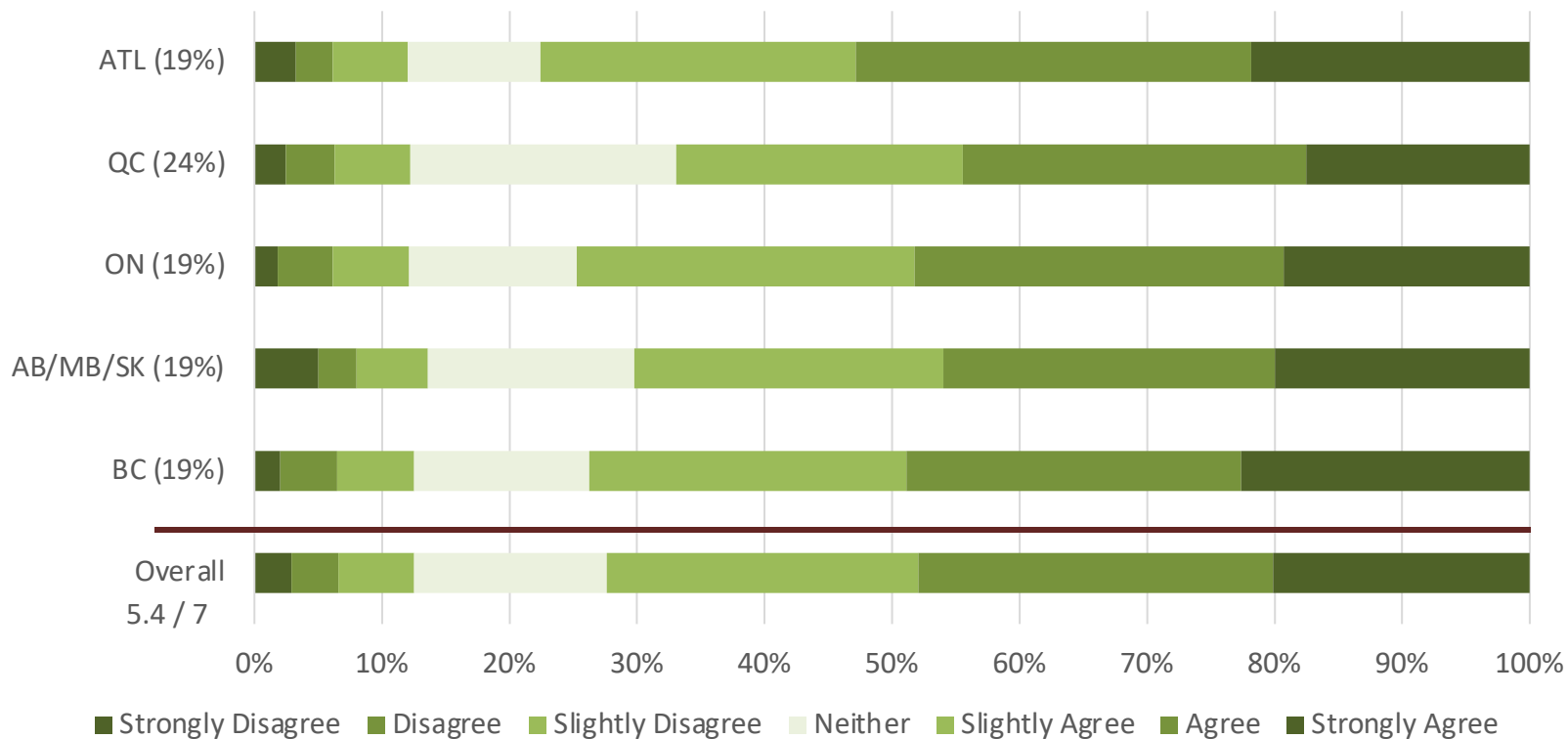
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Retraining: Ideology



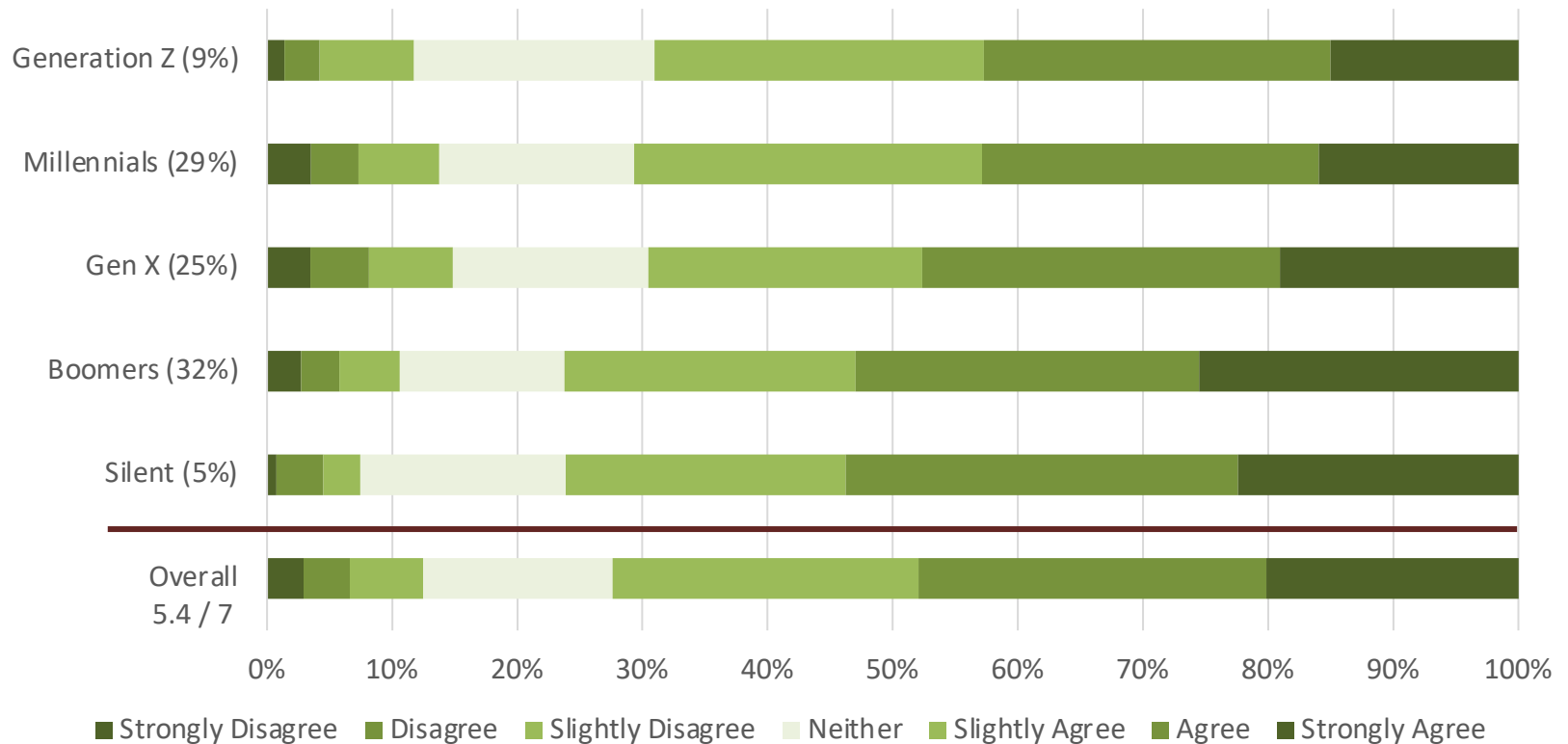
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Retraining: Region



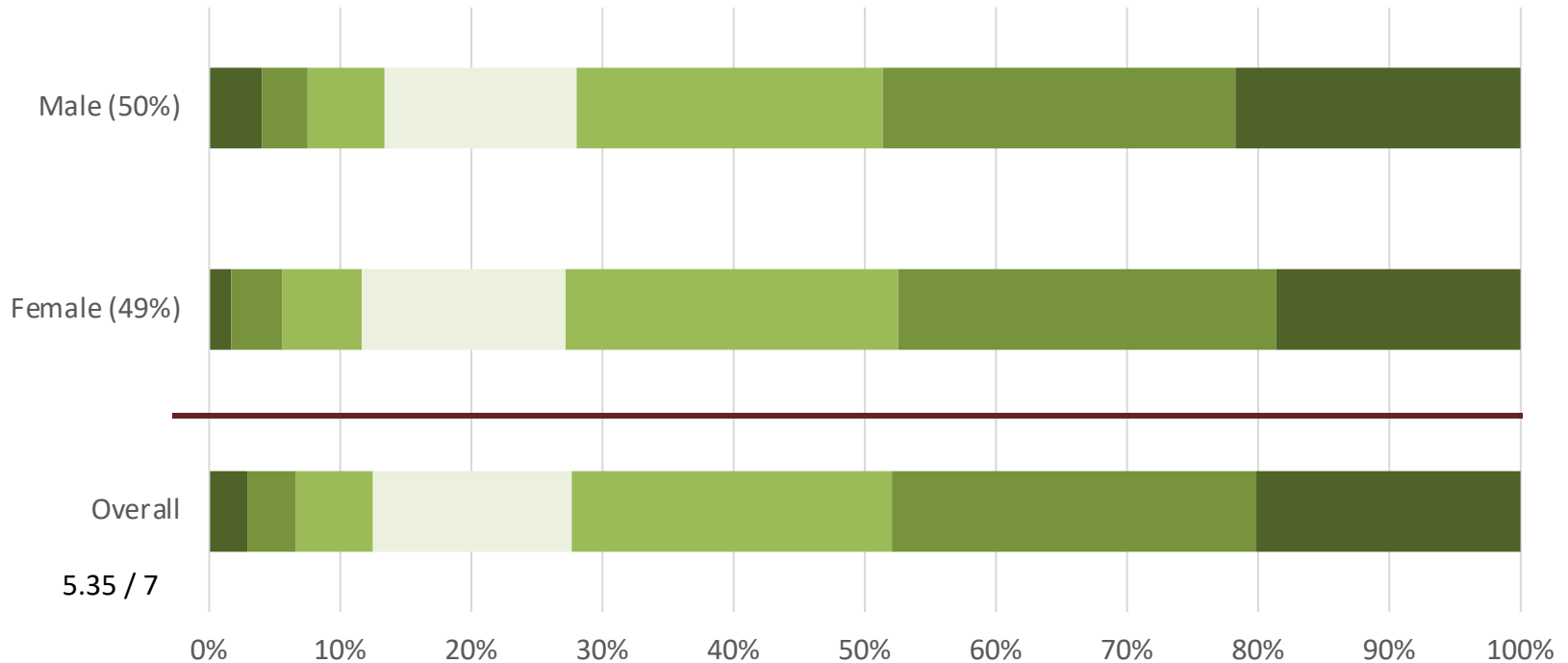
Statement: Canada needs to invest tax dollars into retraining workers who may lose their jobs as the country addresses climate change

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



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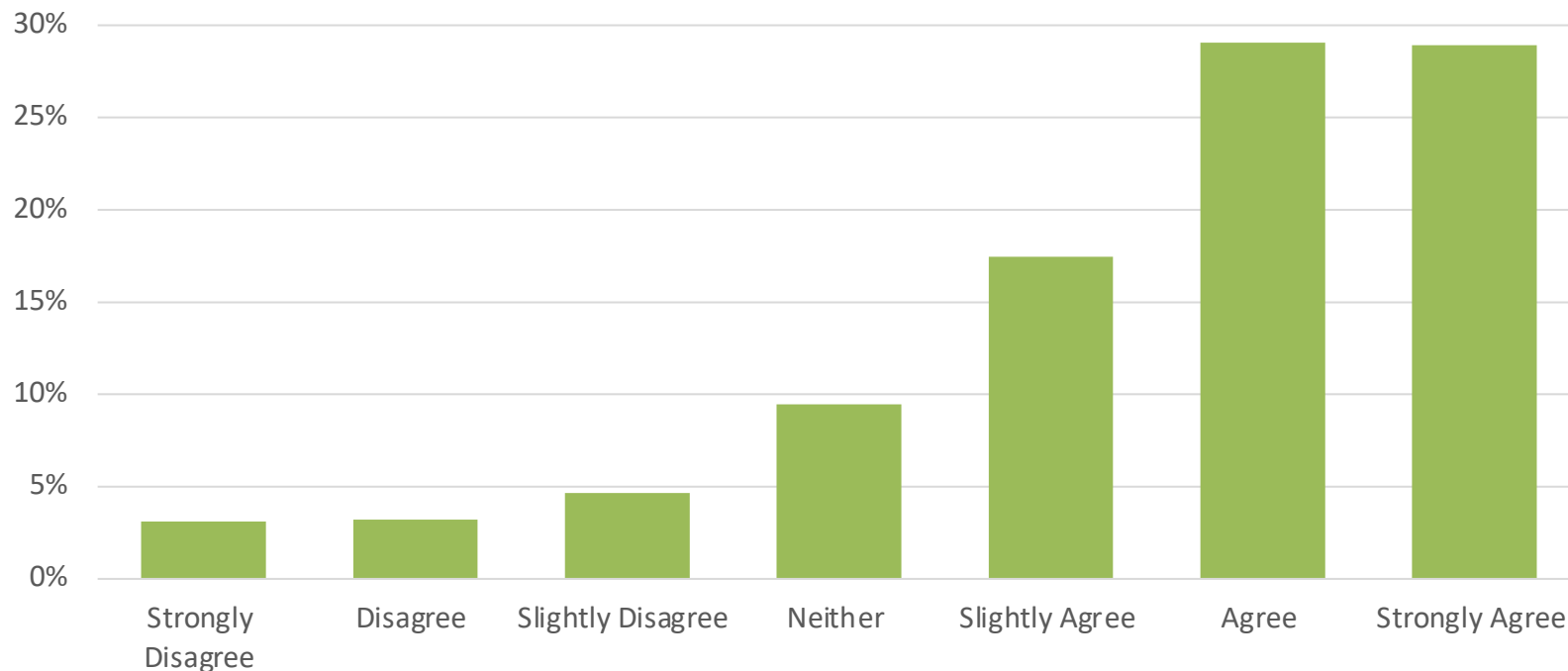
Role of Federal and Provincial Governments



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

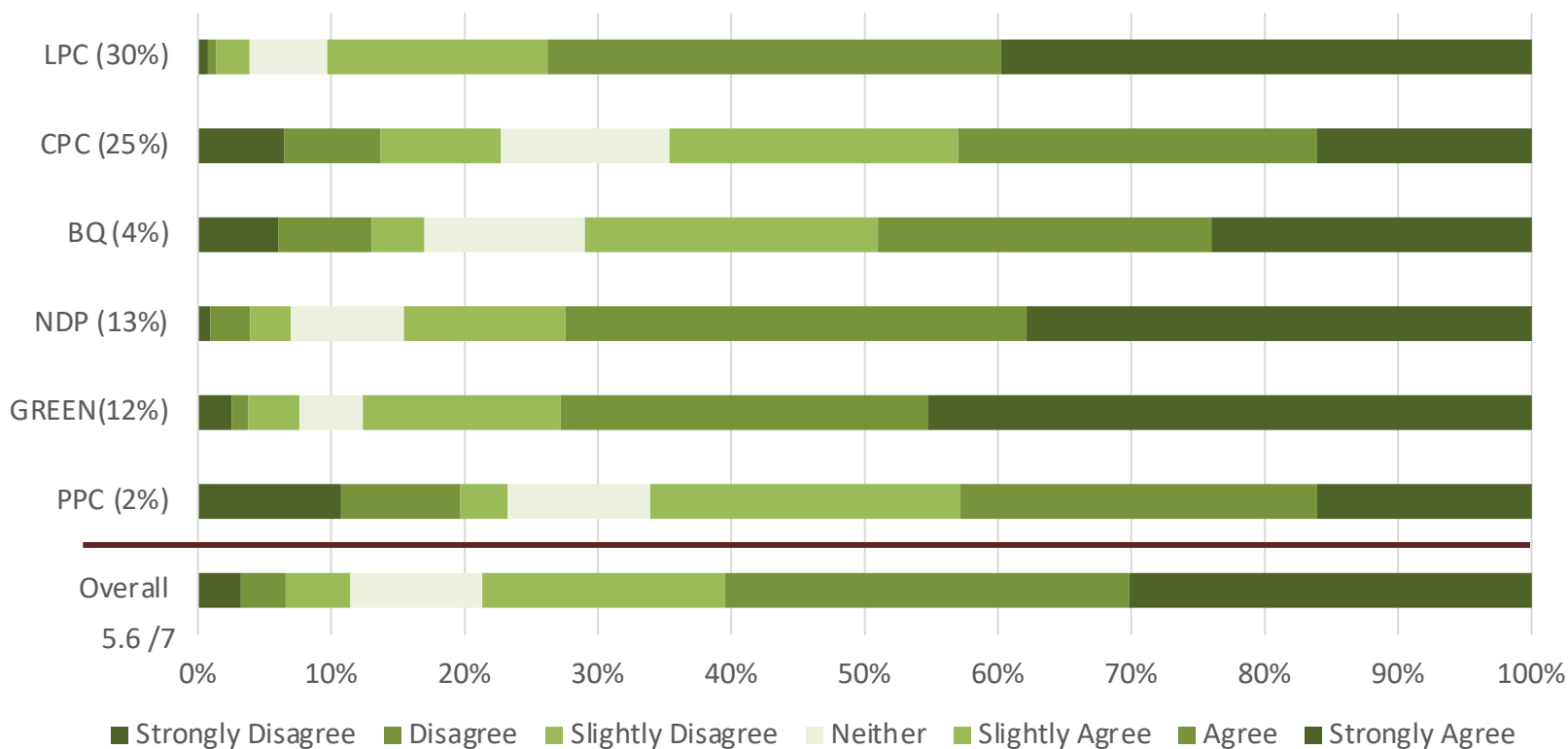
Positive Energy asked Canadians whether the federal government should develop a long-term energy vision for the country, whether it has a role in energy resource development, and whether provinces should have flexibility to tackle climate change as they see fit.

Federal Development of Long-Term Vision



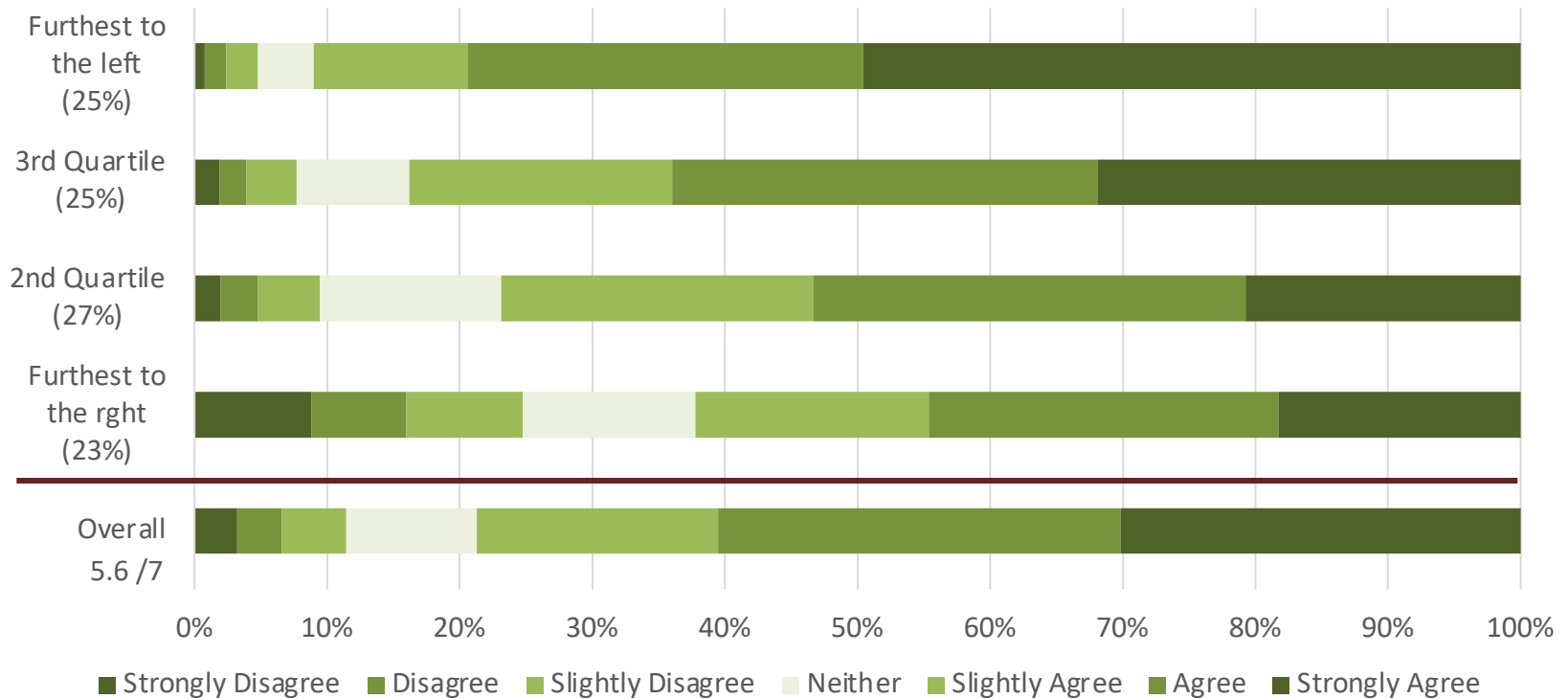
Statement: The federal government needs to develop a long-term energy vision for Canada – even if some provinces don't agree with it

Long-Term Vision: Party



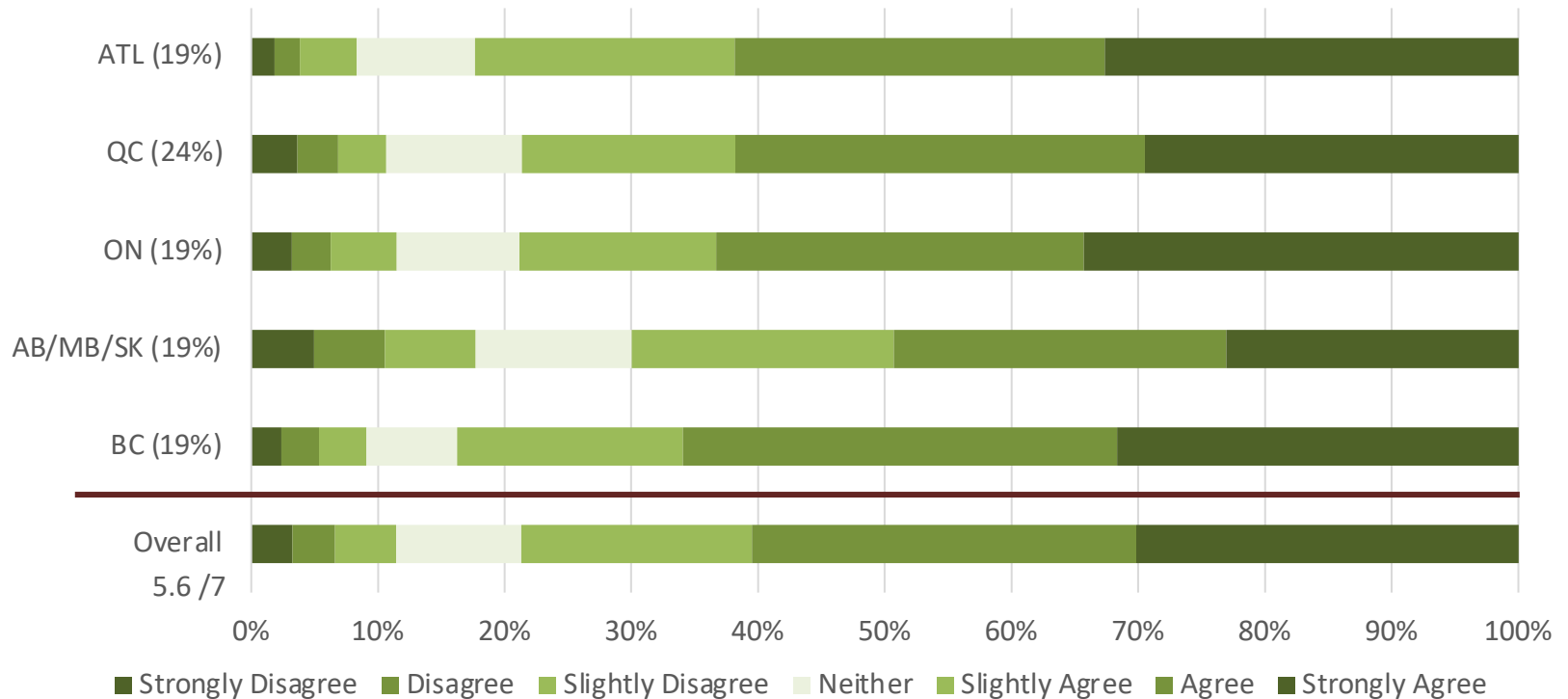
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Long-Term Vision: Ideology



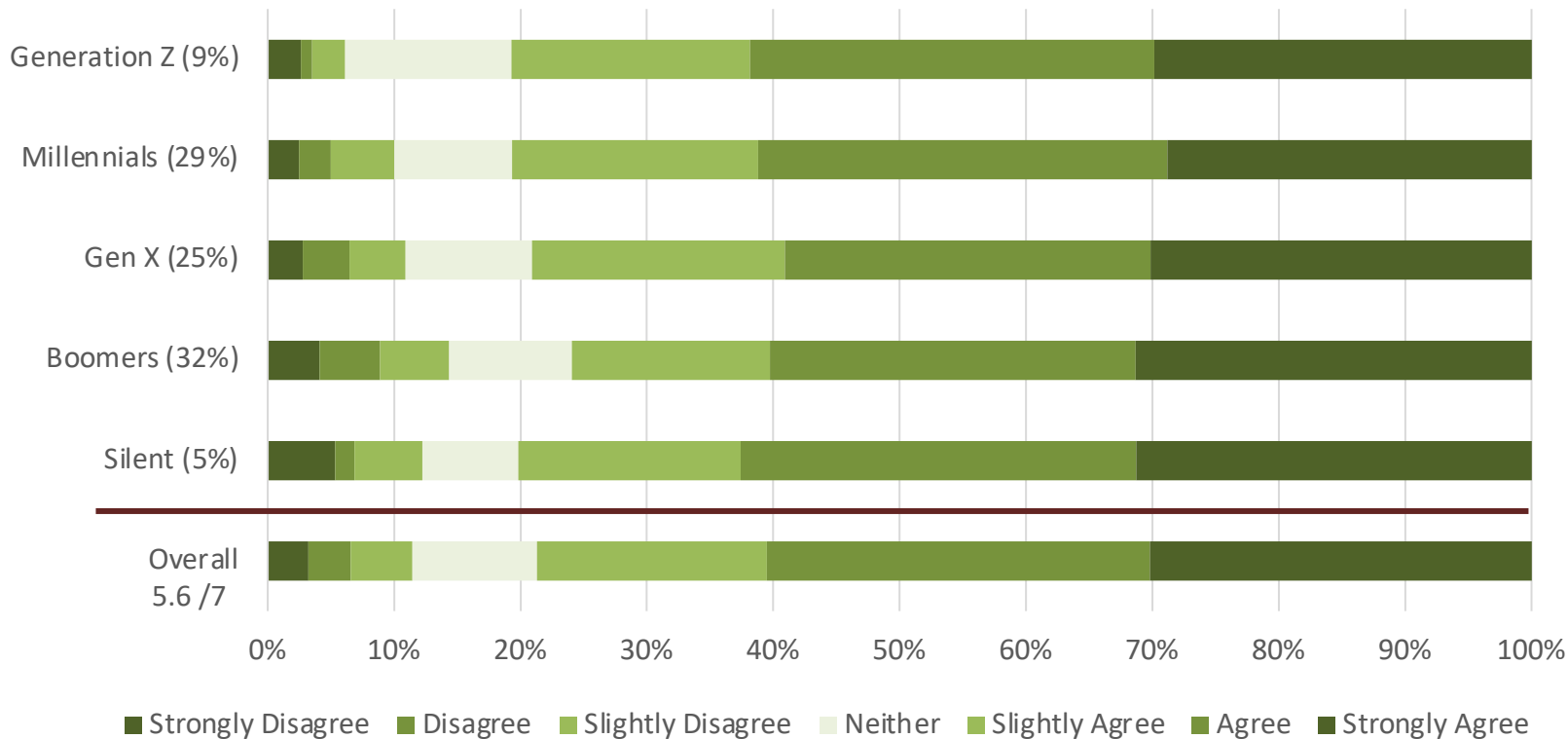
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Long-Term Vision: Region



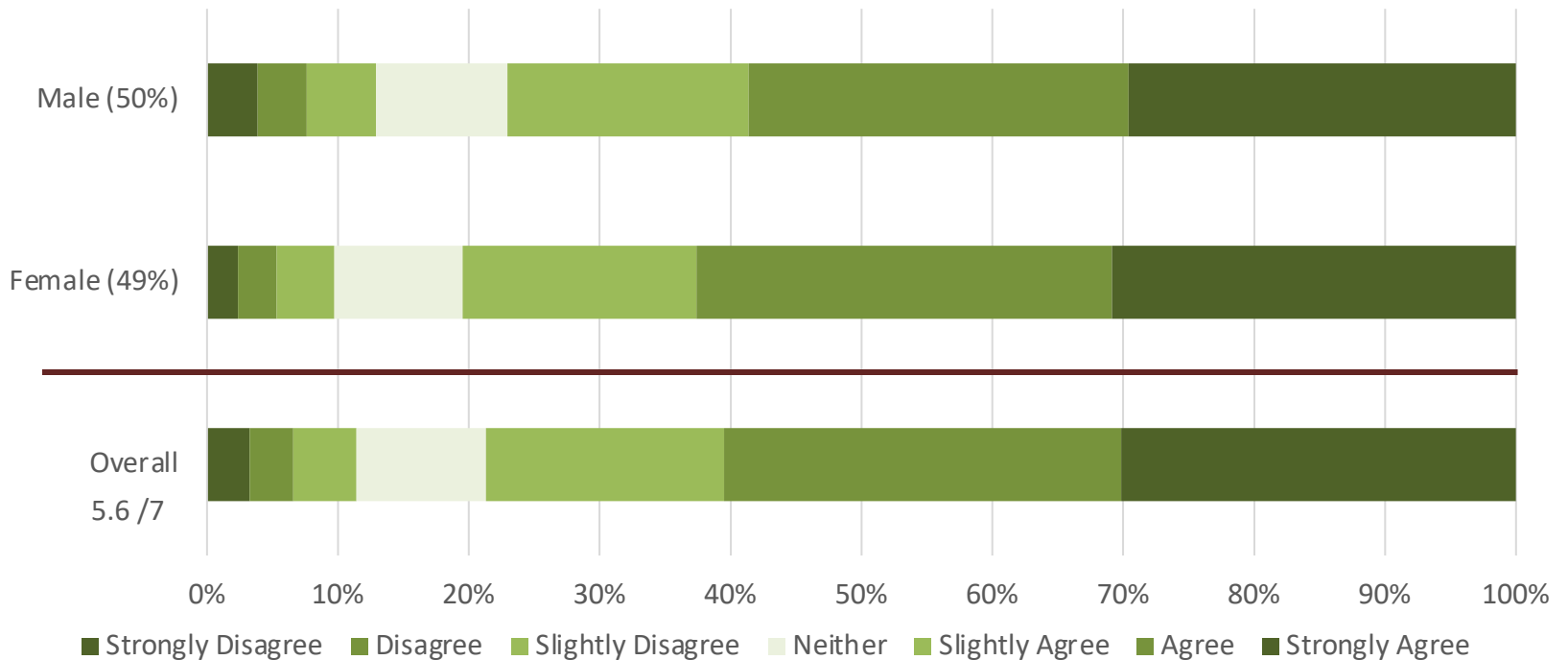
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Long-Term Vision: Age



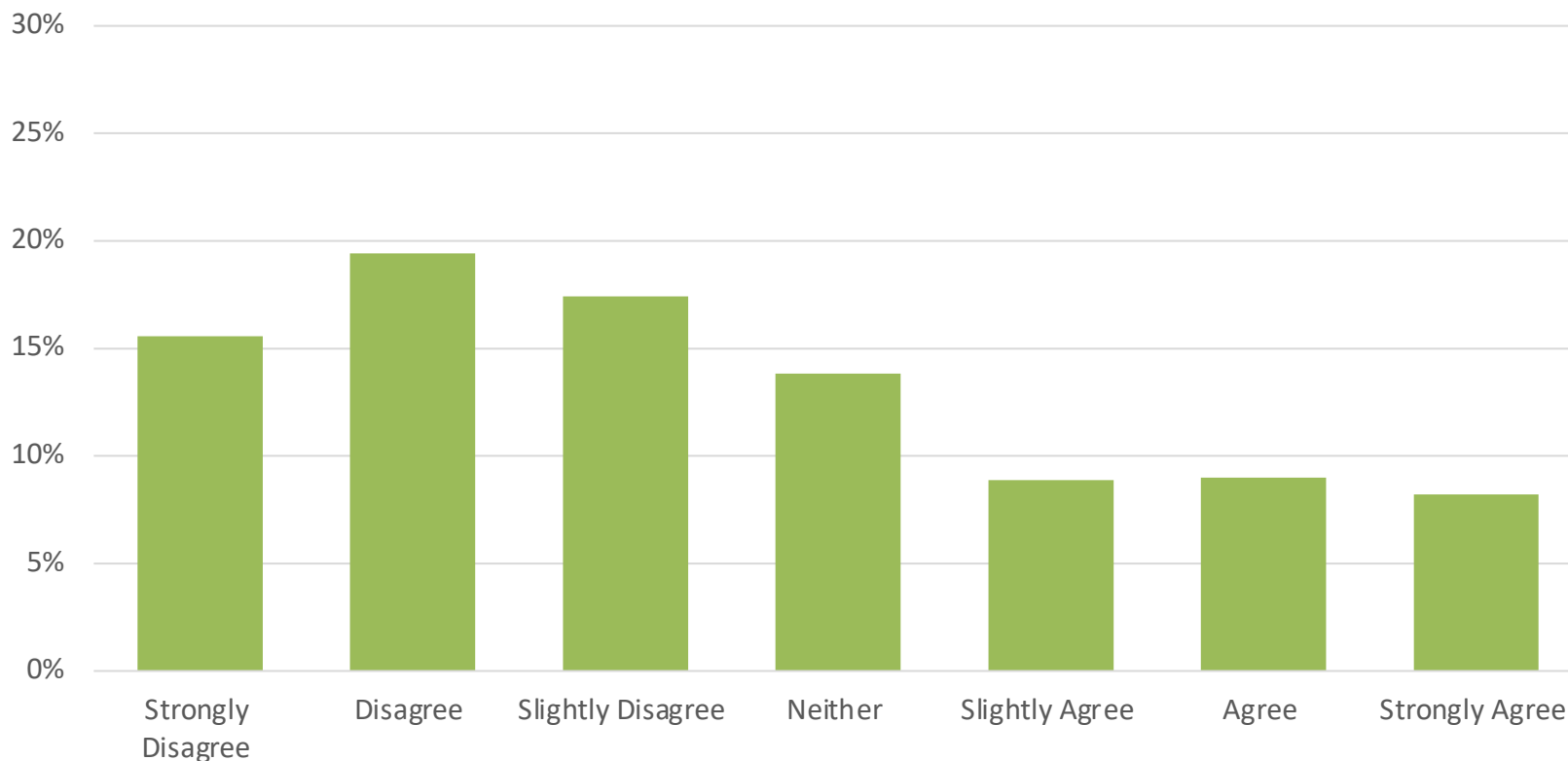
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Long-Term Vision: Gender



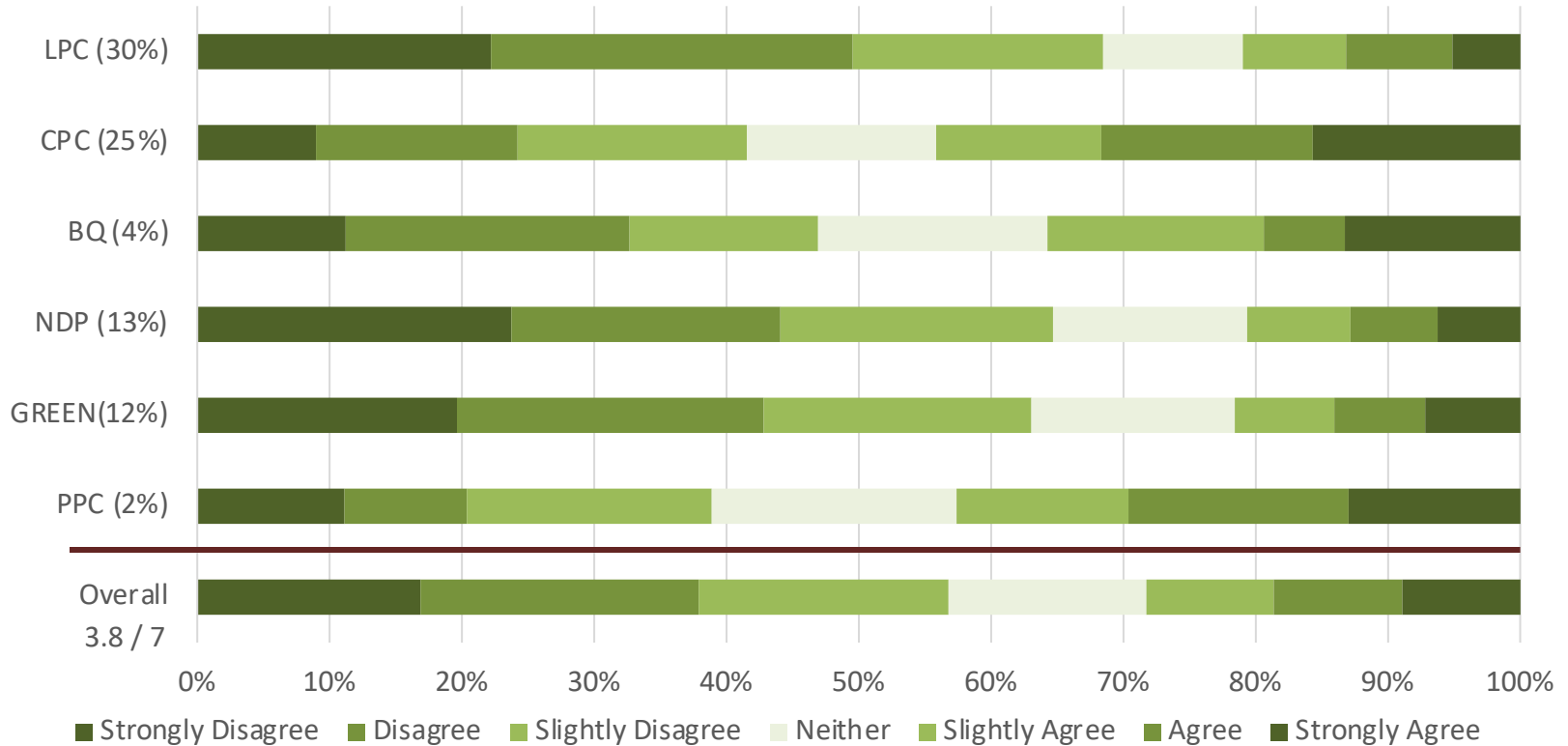
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Federal Role in Energy Development



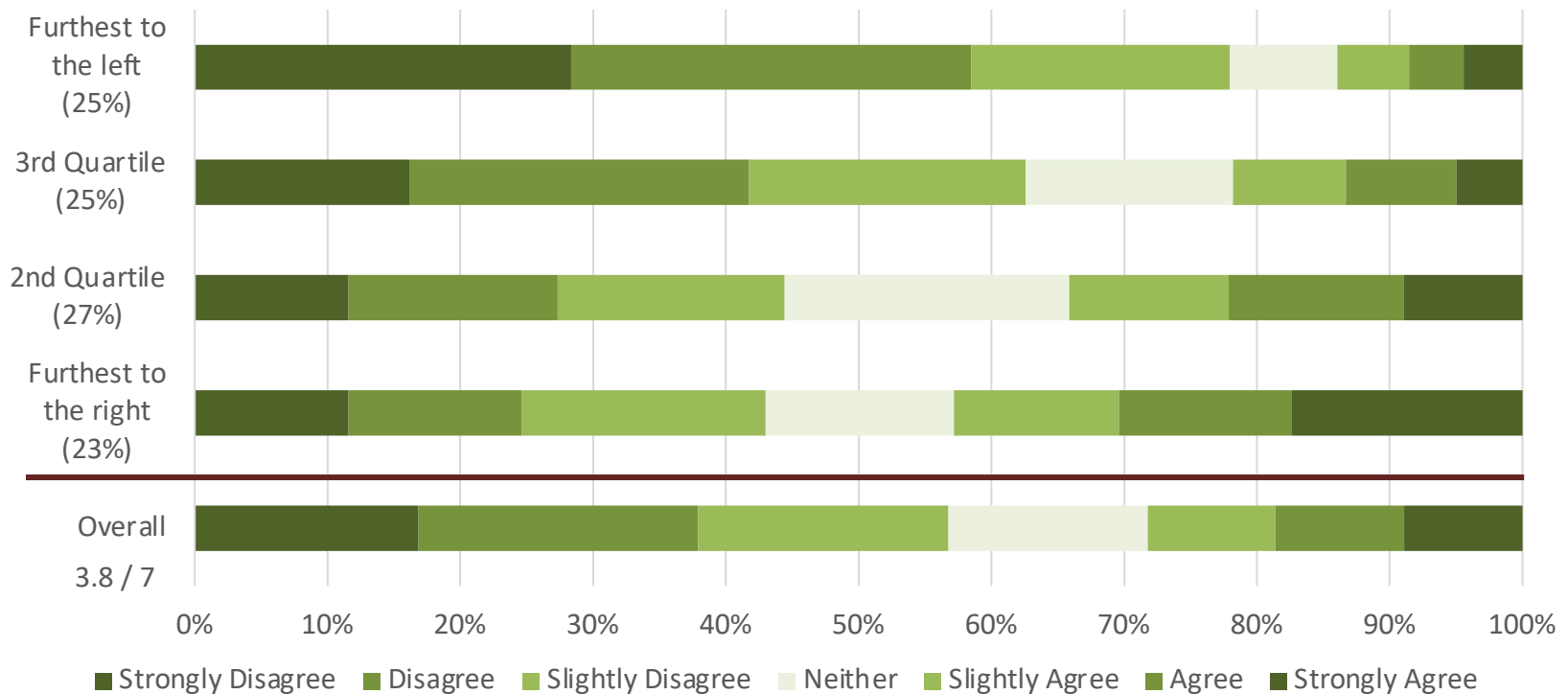
Statement: The federal government has no role in how energy resources are developed in provinces

Federal Role in Energy: Party



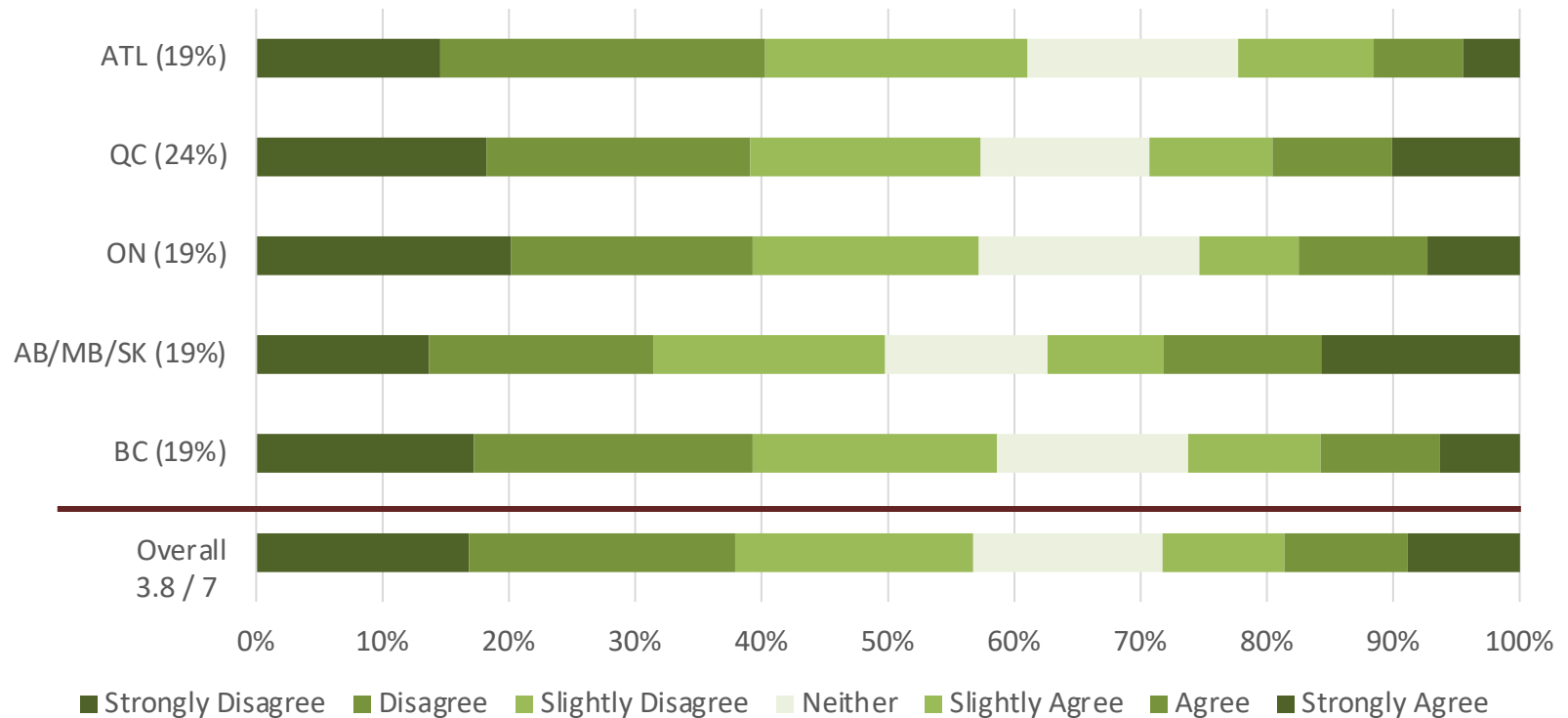
Statement: The federal government has no role in how energy resources are developed in provinces

Federal Role in Energy: Ideology



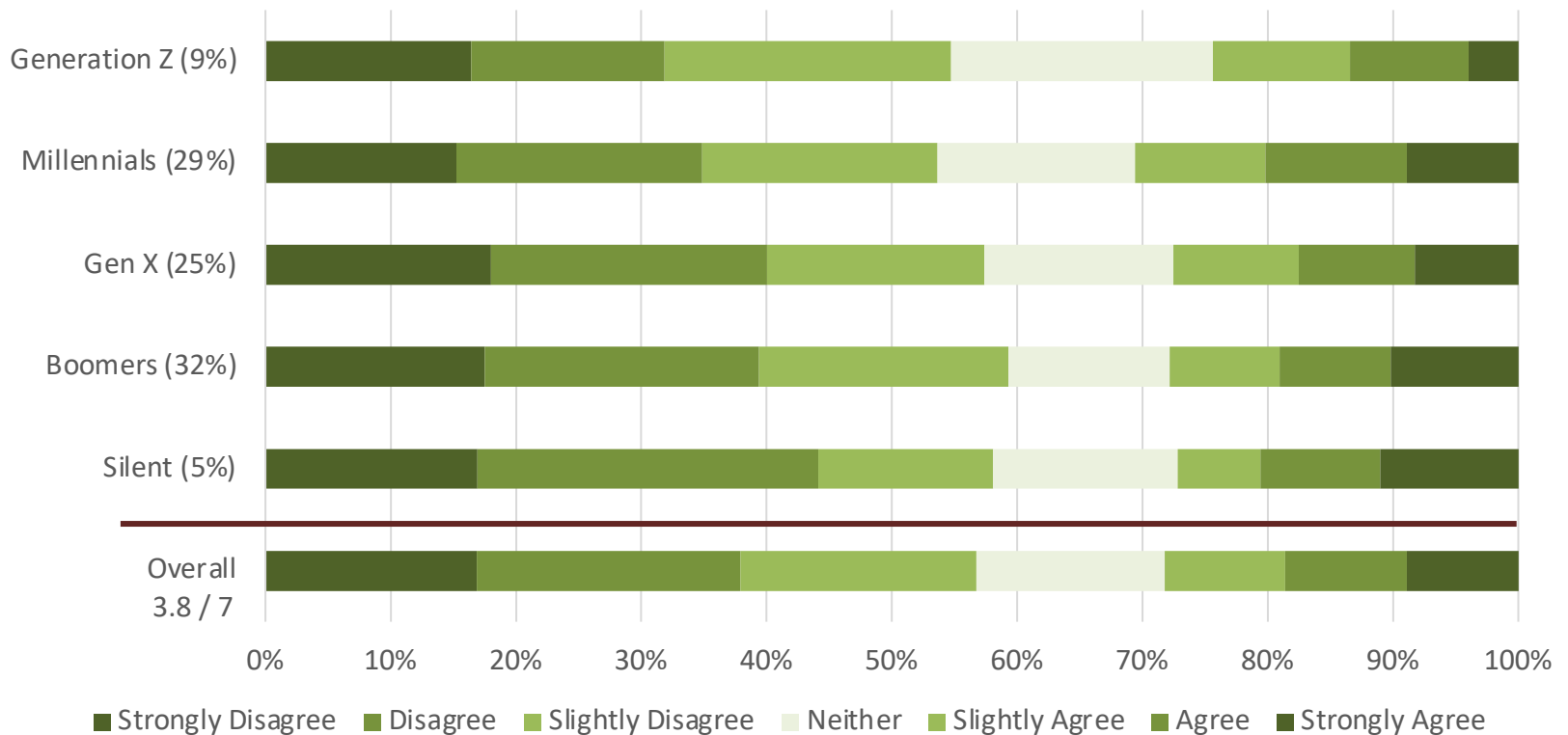
Statement: The federal government has no role in how energy resources are developed in provinces

Federal Role in Energy: Region



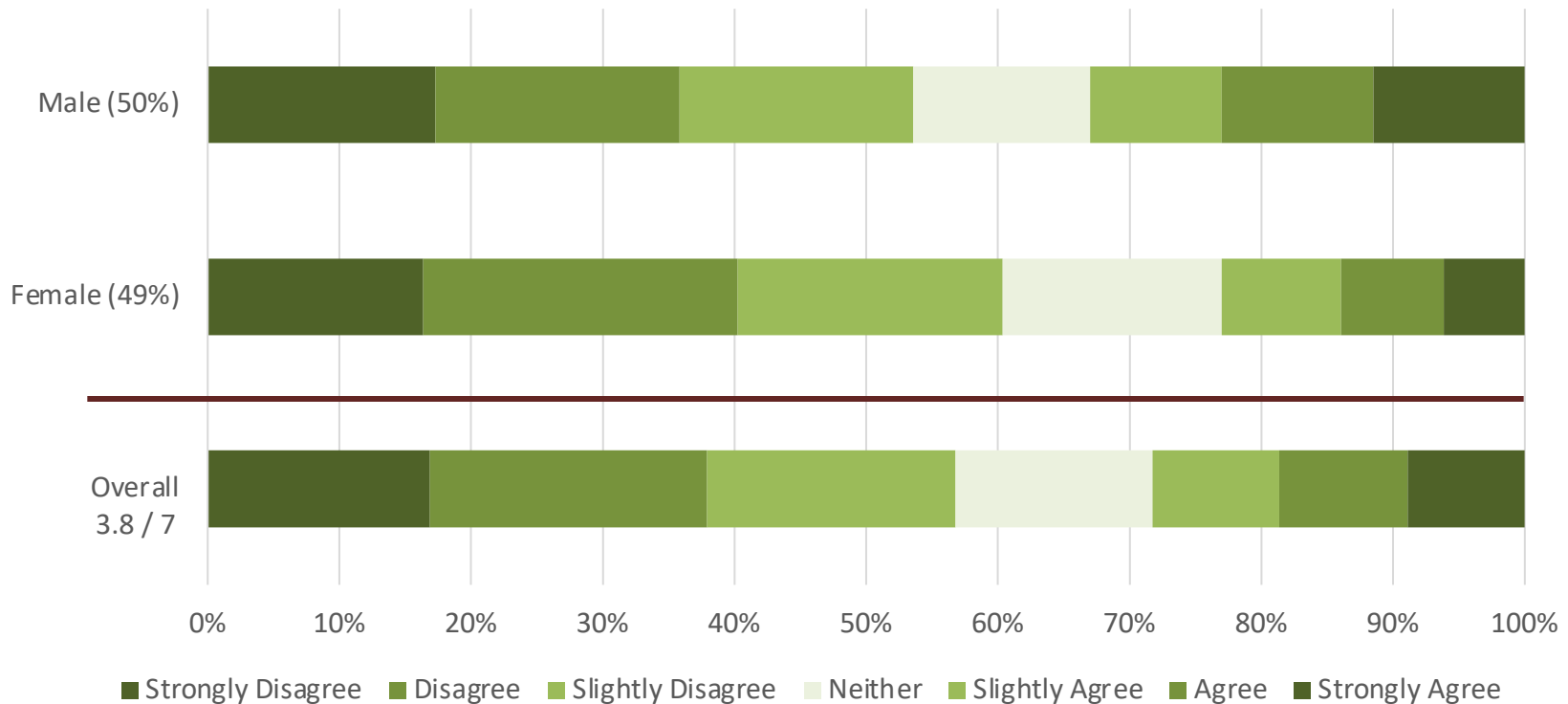
Statement: The federal government has no role in how energy resources are developed in provinces

Federal Role in Energy: Age



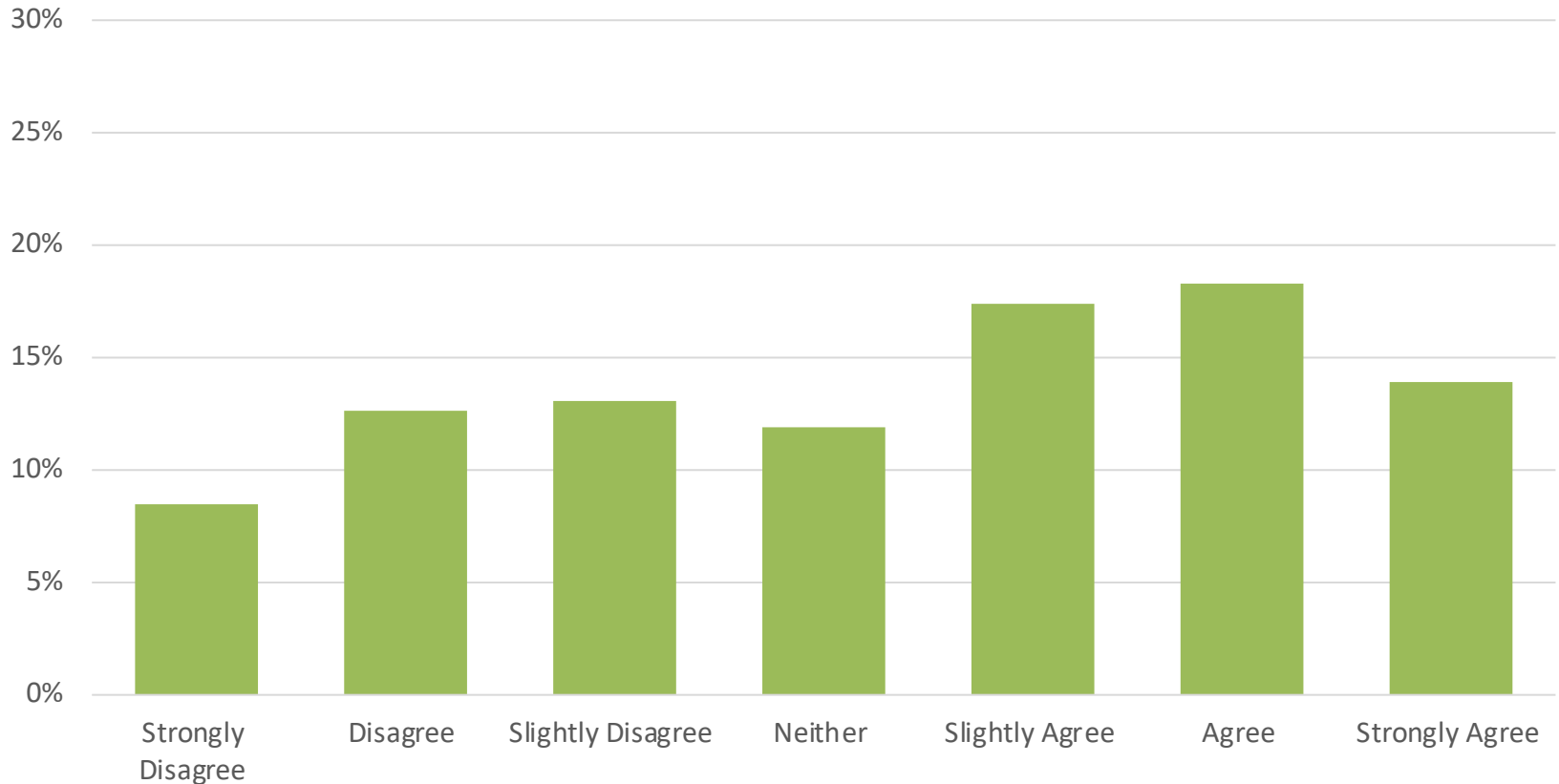
Statement: The federal government has no role in how energy resources are developed in provinces

Federal Role in Energy: Gender



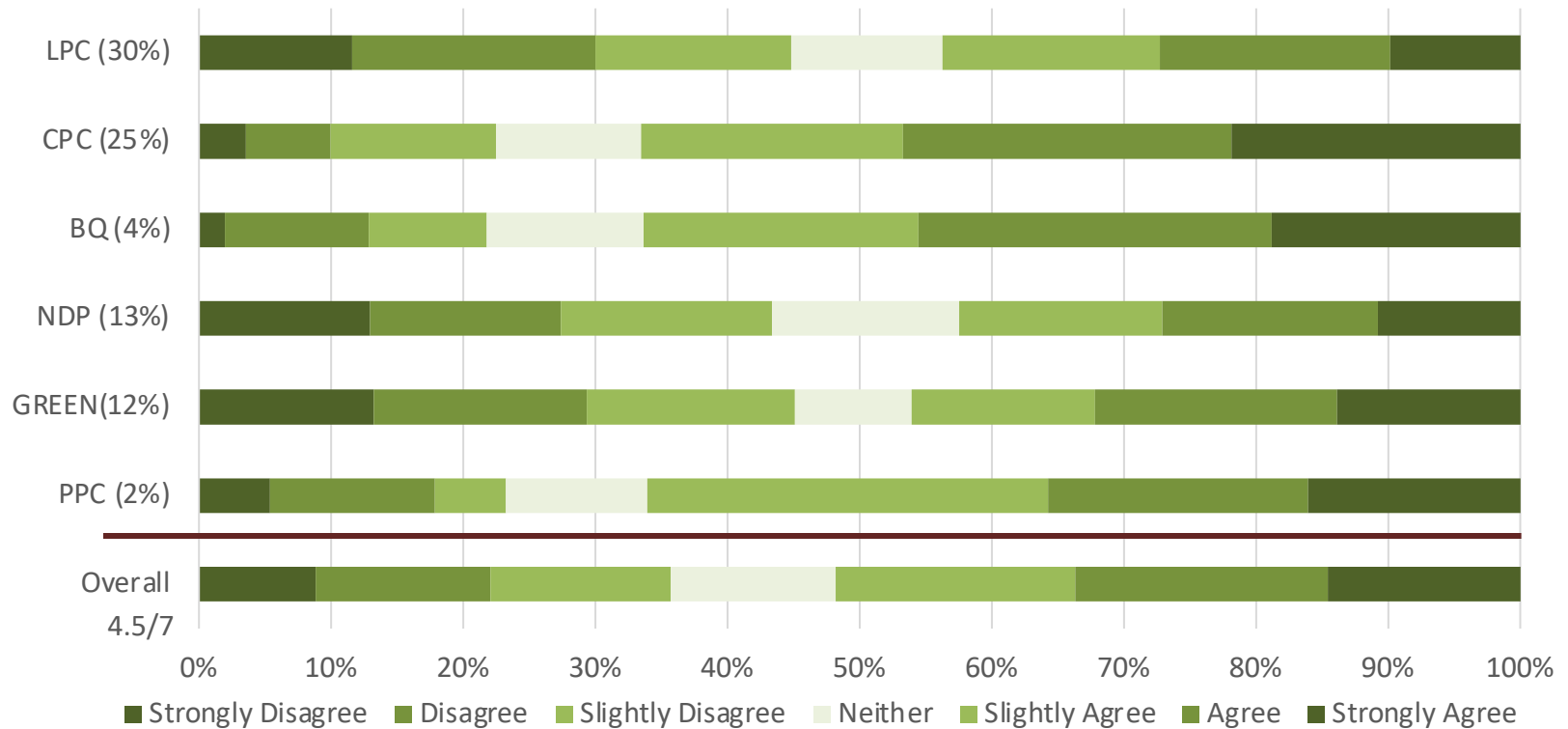
Statement: The federal government has no role in How energy resources are developed in provinces

Provinces and Climate Change



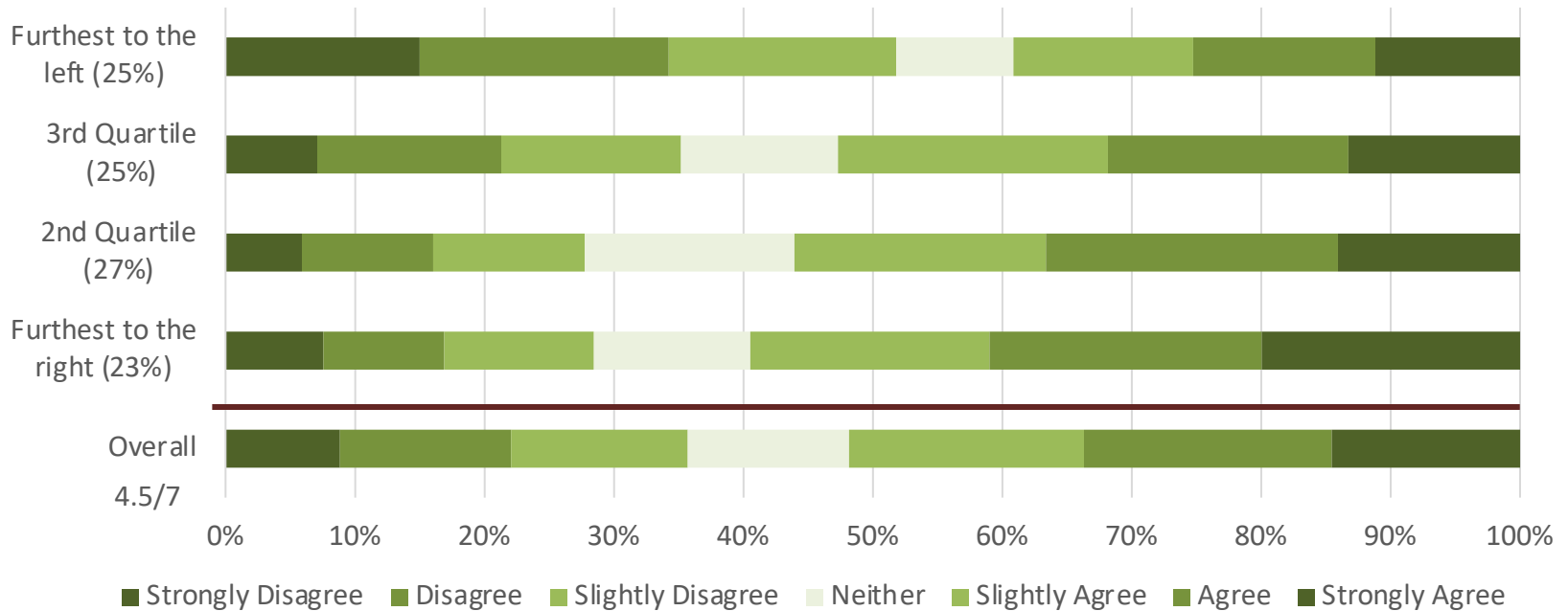
Statement: Provinces should be able to address climate change in whatever way they see fit

Provinces and Climate Change: Party



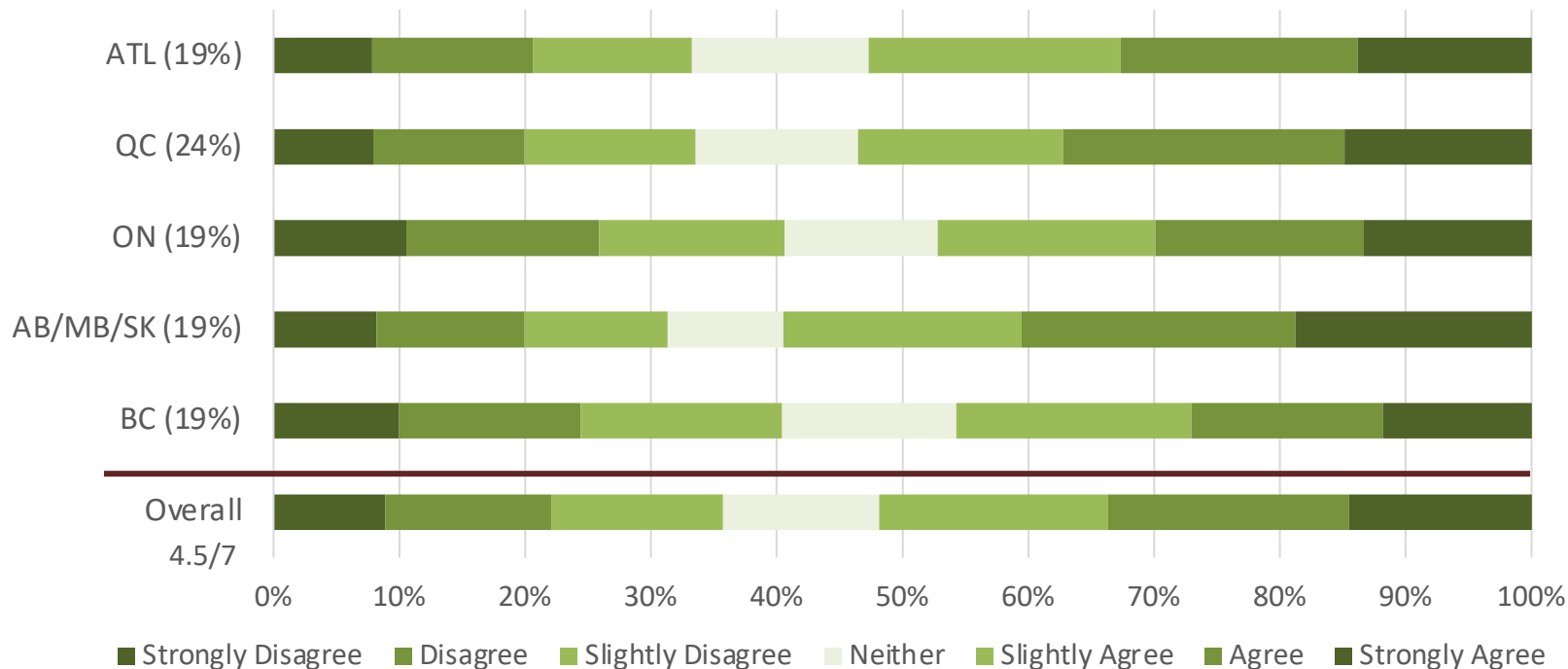
Statement: Provinces should be able to address climate change in whatever way they see fit

Provinces and Climate Change: Ideology



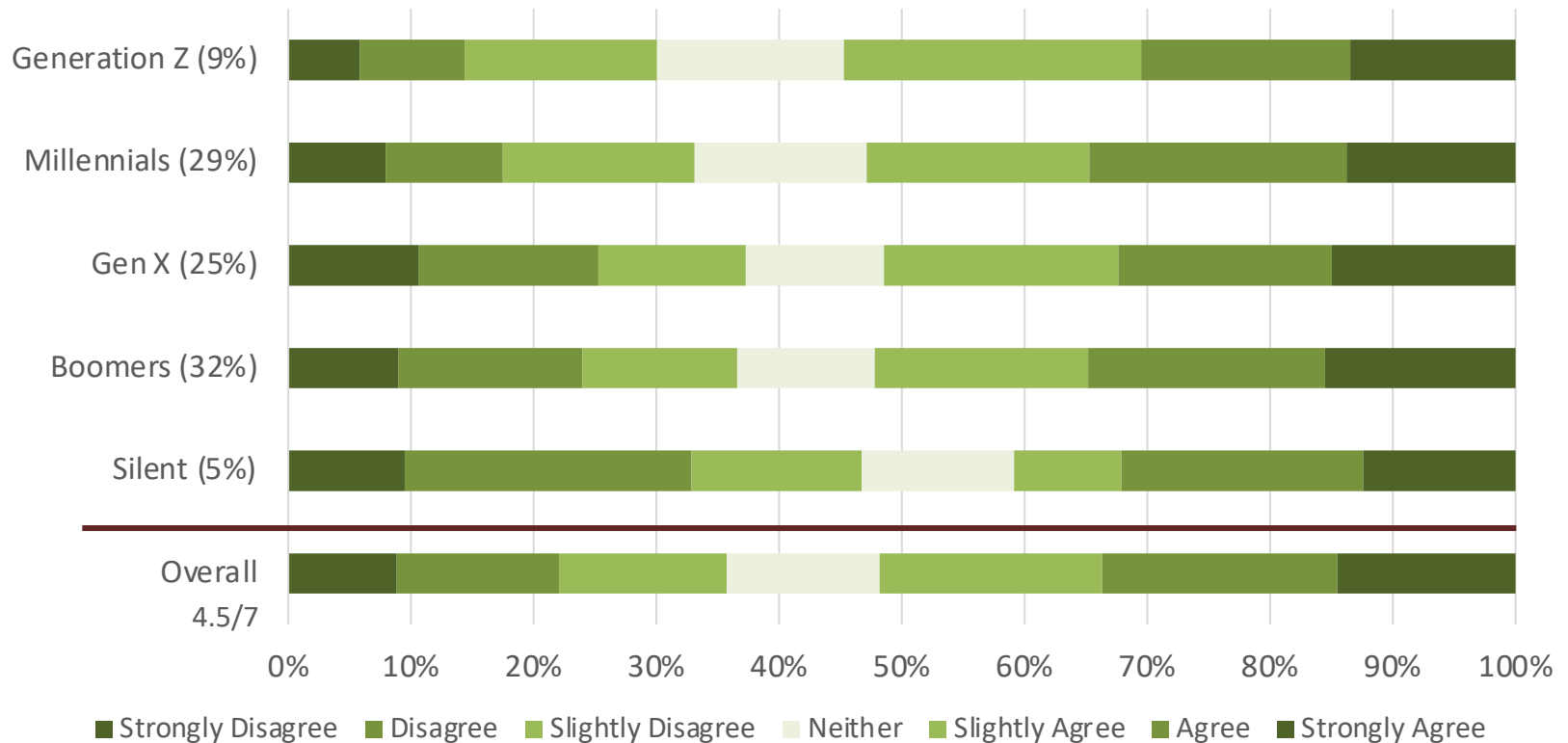
Statement: Provinces should be able to address climate change in whatever way they see fit

Provinces and Climate Change: Region



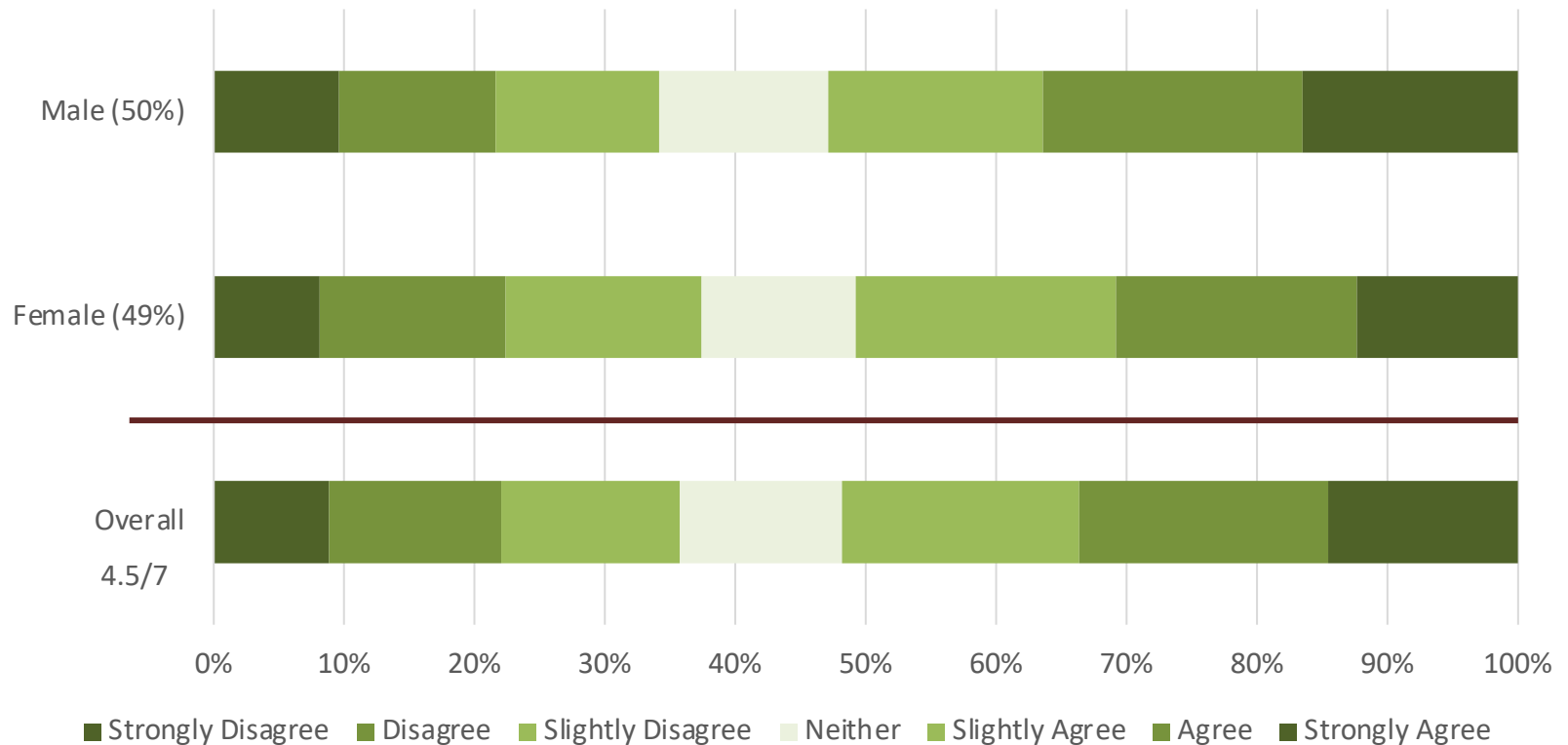
Statement: Provinces should be able to address climate change in whatever way they see fit

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.*

