

2009 Climate Change Debate Surveys (Part II of II) A Harris/Decima study conducted for the Munk Debates

Release Date: Tuesday, December 1

Background:

- The Munk Debates is a Canadian organization that seeks to provide a lively and substantive forum for leading thinkers to debate the major issues facing the world and Canada. Their purpose is to enliven and elevate public discussion of the political, social, and cultural issues shaping the source of world events and Canada's future.
- The fourth Munk Debate will take place on Tuesday, December 1st and explore the global response to climate change by debating the resolution: *"Climate change is mankind's defining crisis, and demands a commensurate response."* The debate's timing is particularly important, held during the week leading up to the U.N. Copenhagen Summit on climate change.
- **This survey is the second part of a two part public opinion study on Canadians' attitudes about climate change. Part two of the study focuses on the "debate" around climate change and the issues that will be explored at the Dec. 1st Munk Debate.**

Spokespersons:

- For analysis of the survey finding including commentary on Canada climate change policy please contact Rudyard Griffiths, Co-Organiser, The Munk Debates, rudyard@munkdebates.com or at 416 737 9636
- For methodology and survey construction information and background please contact Doug Anderson, Harris/Decima's Senior Vice President of Public Affairs research at danderson@harridecima.com or at 613-230-2200.

Methodology:

- On behalf of the Munk Debates, Harris/Decima conducted a randomly dialed telephone survey with a Canadian sample of 1,009 adults. This study was run between November 12th and November 15th, 2009. The weighting scheme used accounts for age, gender and region, and brings the sample population into line with their actual proportions in the population, based on 2006 census data.
- Unless otherwise stated the following unweighted base sizes apply to all data presented. Because of rounding, percentages of graphs may not add up to 100%.

Demographic Category	Unweighted sample size
Total	1,009
Male	503
Female	506
Atlantic	100
Quebec	250
Ontario	327
Manitoba / Saskatchewan	103
Alberta	102
British Columbia	127
18-34 year olds	173
35-54 year olds	410
55 years and older	426

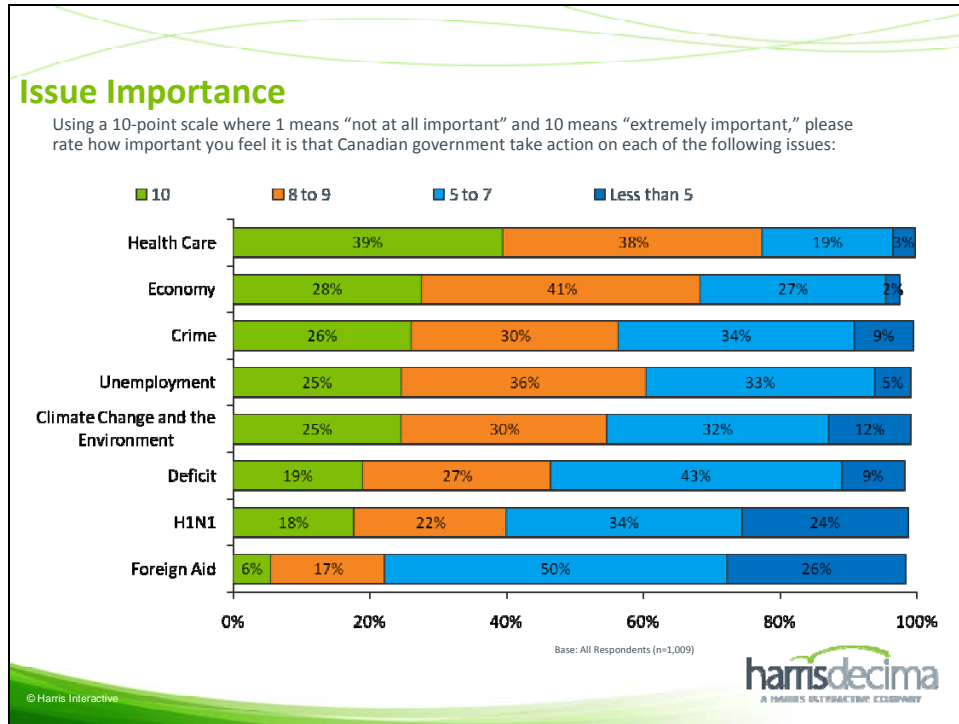
OVERALL FINDINGS

Overall, two thirds of Canadians agree with the Munk Debate resolution that climate change constitutes mankind’s defining crisis. After determining their initial standpoint (pro vs. con), Canadians were asked to evaluate a spectrum of arguments regarding climate change. These statements were based on some of the arguments proposed by each side of the Munk Debate. After evaluating each statement, Canadians were again asked to rate their agreements with the debate resolution. Overall, agreement with the resolution remained fairly stable, however 13% of participants did change their minds about whether or not climate change was mankind’s defining crisis (56% of this group became more pro while 42% became more con).

This study also shows that the majority of Canadians are aware of the upcoming UN conference on climate change that will take place in Copenhagen. Furthermore, a majority of Canadians felt that the government should pursue an international treaty on climate change.

ISSUE IMPORTANCE

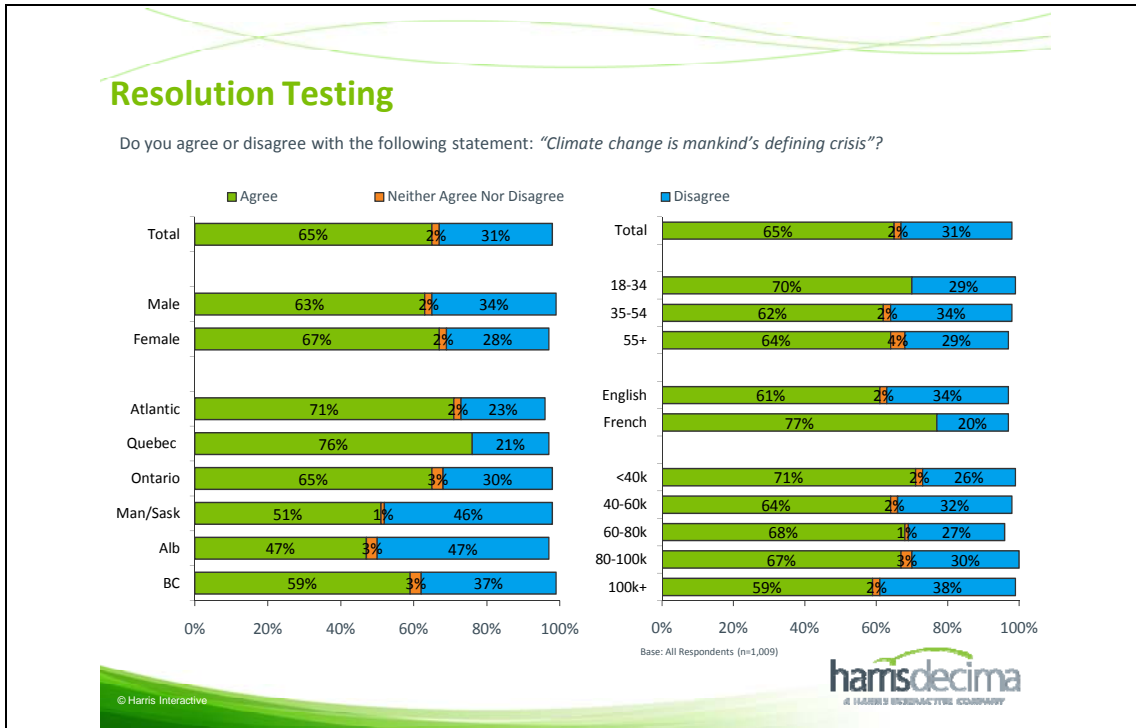
When independently tested, Climate Change and the Environment are rated as 'extremely important' by one quarter (25%) of Canadians; another 30% rated it highly (8 or 9 on a 10-point scale). Other issues facing Canadians were also tested, and four domestic issues – health care, economy, unemployment, and crime – were ranked as more important than climate change and environment.



CLIMATE CHANGE AS DEFINING CRISIS

When the debate resolution was first tested, nearly two thirds (65%) agreed that *climate change is mankind's defining crisis*. Conversely, three in ten (31%) disagreed. Quebecers are significantly more likely to agree with the debate resolution relative to residents of other provinces, while those living in the Prairies are the least likely to agree with the resolution.

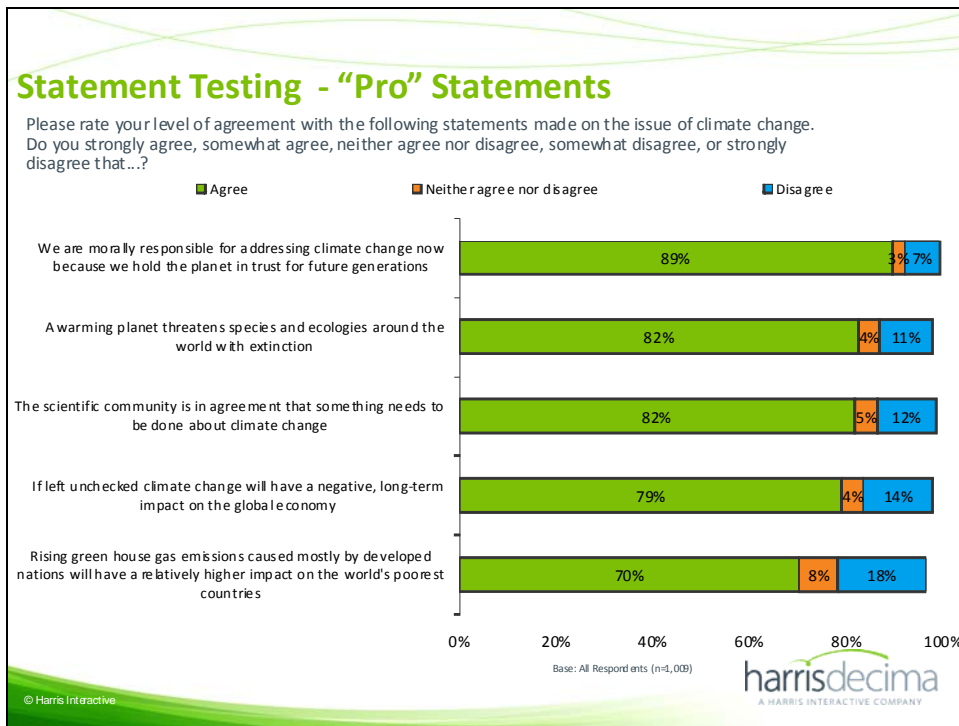
Proportions of agreement are also significantly higher among those under 35 years of age compared to older cohorts.



EVALUATION OF CLIMATE CHANGE ARGUMENTS

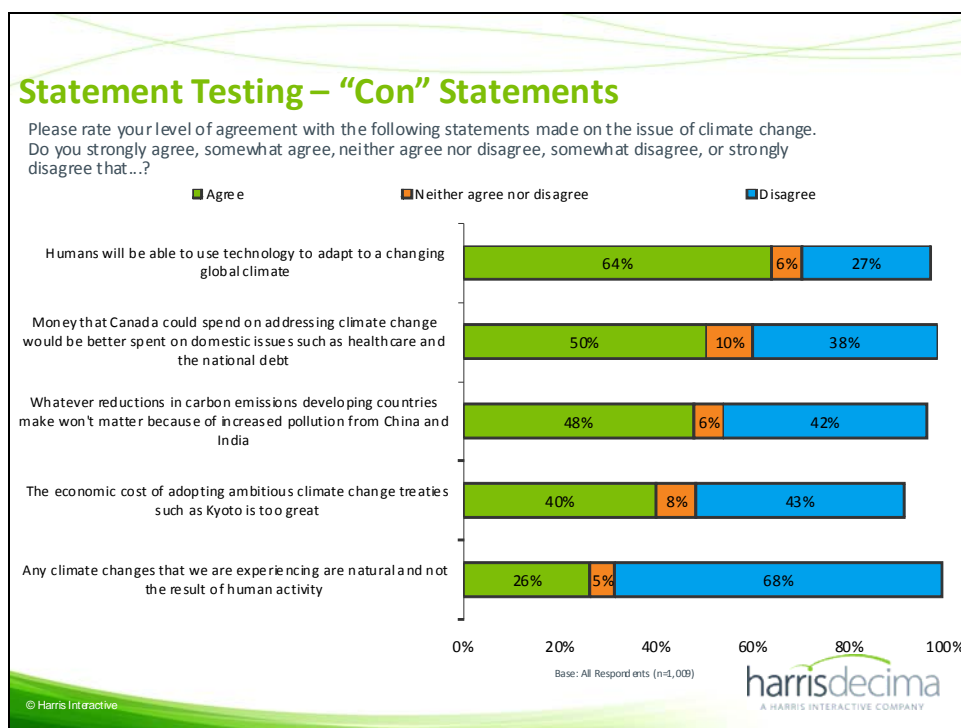
Ten statements related to the debate on climate change were tested; five statements supporting the “pro” side of the debate resolution and five statements supporting the “con” side. While agreement was high for all statements tested, participants generally agreed more with the “pro” statements than the “con” statements. This can be expected due to some degree since the majority of people fall on the “pro” side of the debate (agreeing with the resolution). When agreement with each statement is considered by those on the pro vs. con sides of the debate, the results are as follows:

- There is a strong belief (89%) that we are morally responsible for addressing climate change now because we hold the planet in trust for future generations (98% of “pro” believers agreed vs. 72% of “con” believers)
- Eight in ten people (82%) agree that a warming planet threatens species and ecologies around the world with extinction (94% of “pro” believers agreed vs. 60% of “con” believers)
- Similar proportions (82%) agree that the scientific community is in agreement that something needs to be done about climate change (92% of “pro” believers agreed vs. 60% of “con” believers)
- A majority (79%) feel that if left unchecked, climate change will have a negative, long-term impact on the global economy (90% of “pro” believers agreed vs. 55% of “con” believers)
- Fully 70% feel that rising green house gas emissions caused mostly by developed nations will have a relatively higher impact on the world’s poorest countries (80% of “pro” believers agreed vs. 53% of “con” believers)



The results of the “con” side statements are as follows:

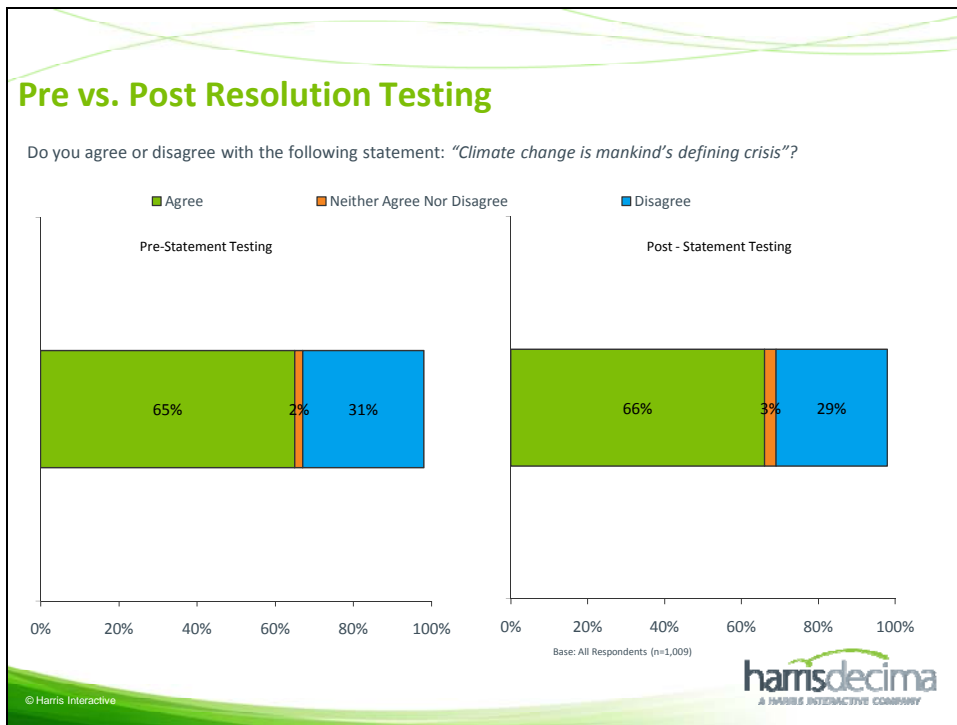
- Nearly two thirds (64%) agree that humans will be able to adapt to a changing global climate (62% of “pro” believers agreed vs. 70% of “con” believers)
- Half (50%) believe money that Canada could spend on addressing climate change would be better spent on domestic issues such as health care and national debt (42% of “pro” believers agreed vs. 67% of “con” believers)
- Similar proportions (48%) agree that whatever reductions in carbon emissions developing countries make won’t matter because of increased pollution from China and India (43% of “pro” believers agree vs. 58% of “con” believers)
- When it comes to the economic cost of adopting ambitious climate change treaties such as Kyoto, opinions are fairly evenly split between agree and disagree (40% vs. 43% respectively) (33% of “pro” believers agreed vs. 54% of “con” believers)
- Relative to the other statements, the argument that climate change is a result of natural causes and not human activity does not emerge as being as one of the compelling arguments, with only 26% agreeing and the majority (68%) disagreeing (17% of “pro” believers agreed vs. 43% of “con” believers)



RETESTING OF DEBATE RESOLUTION

Following the testing of each of the statements, the debate resolution was tested again. At first glance, the results to the post-test resolution are very similar to the pre-test resolution. There was only a slight shift (+1% for agreement, + 1% for neither agree nor disagree, 2% for disagreement) in aggregate, but in fact we find that 13% of respondents changed their opinion.

Roughly, three-fifths of respondents continued to agree, and one-quarter of respondents continued to disagree. However, 7% of respondents' opinion became more positive, and 6% of respondents' opinion became more negative. The overall proportions of those who agreed with each statement, within each of these four groups, are presented below.



Levels of Agreement with “Pro” Statements

% who agree with statements	Did not change opinion		Changed opinion	
	Pro	Con	Became More Pro	Became More Con
The scientific community is in agreement that something needs to be done about climate change	93%	55%	83%	77%
If left unchecked climate change will have a negative, long-term impact on the global economy	92%	52%	74%	67%
Rising green house gas emissions caused mostly by developed nations will have a relatively higher impact on the world's poorest countries	81%	50%	66%	59%
A warming planet threatens species and ecologies around the world with extinction	95%	56%	80%	84%
We are morally responsible for addressing climate change now because we hold the planet in trust for future generations	99%	67%	92%	89%

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Levels of Agreement with “Con” Statements

% who agree with statements	Did not change opinion		Changed opinion	
	Con	Pro	Became More Con	Became More Pro
Any climate changes that we are experiencing are natural and not the result of human activity	47%	16%	37%	28%
Humans will be able to use technology to adapt to a changing global climate	69%	62%	62%	67%
The economic cost of adopting ambitious climate change treaties such as Kyoto is too great	56%	32%	44%	50%
Whatever reductions in carbon emissions developing countries make won't matter because of increased pollution from China and India	60%	43%	54%	50%
Money that Canada could spend on addressing climate change would be better spent on domestic issues such as healthcare and the national debt	67%	41%	53%	67%

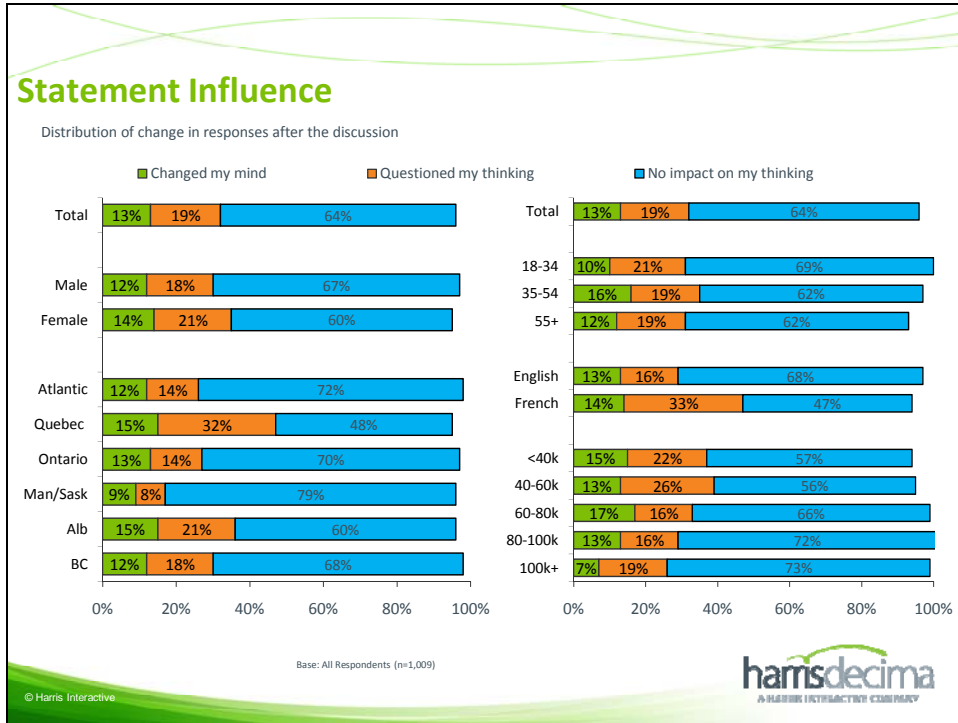
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IMPACT OF STATEMENTS ON VIEWS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Overall, roughly one third (32%) of Canadians were affected by the statements – with 13% changing their position on the debate resolution and 19% saying that their thinking was questioned.

Relative to other provinces, Quebecers were the most likely to be impacted by the statements, with 15% changing their minds and 32% questioning their thinking. Likelihood to change or question one’s views were also correlated to income, with lower income brackets demonstrating a higher propensity to have their views on the debate resolution affected by the statements.



REGRESSION ANALYSIS

To further understand the impact of the statements on the debate resolution, a linear regression analysis was conducted with each of the ten statements against agreement (*after* hearing the statements) that climate change is mankind's defining crisis. The five positively correlated statements were tested against the resolution.

The "pro" arguments most effective at driving people to **agree** with the resolution were:

- #1. A warming planet threatens species and ecologies around the world with extinction;
- #2. If left unchecked climate change will have a negative, long-term impact on the global economy; and
- #3. We are morally responsible for addressing climate change now because we hold the planet in trust for future generations.

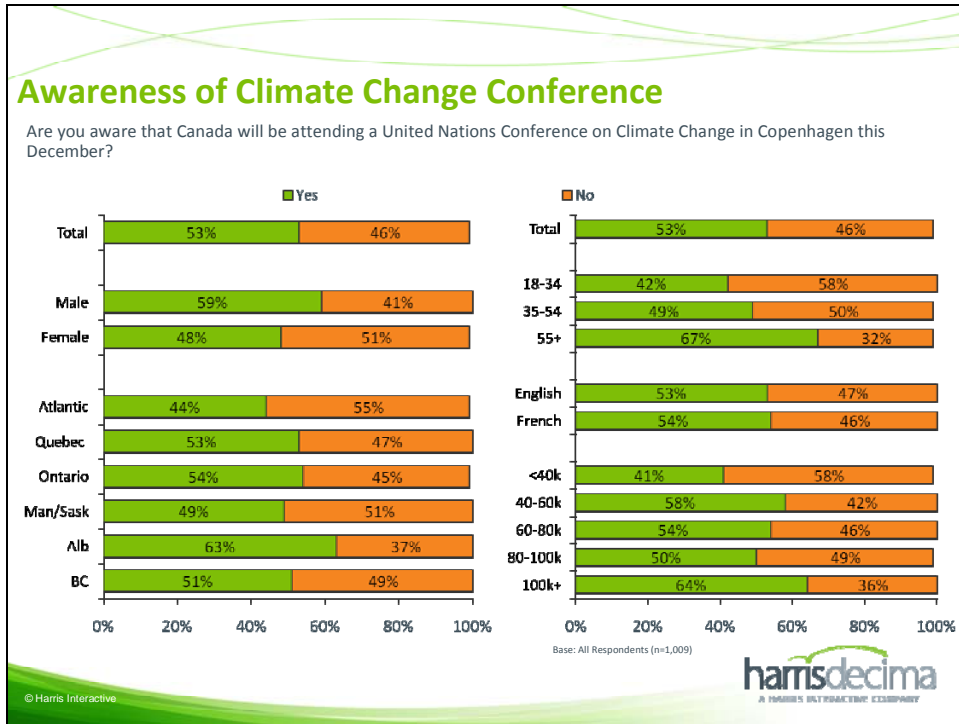
The "con" arguments most effective at driving people to **disagree** with the resolution were:

- #1. Any climate changes that we are experiencing are natural and not the result of human activity; and
- #2. The economic cost of adopting ambitious climate change treaties such as Kyoto is too great.

AWARENESS OF CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

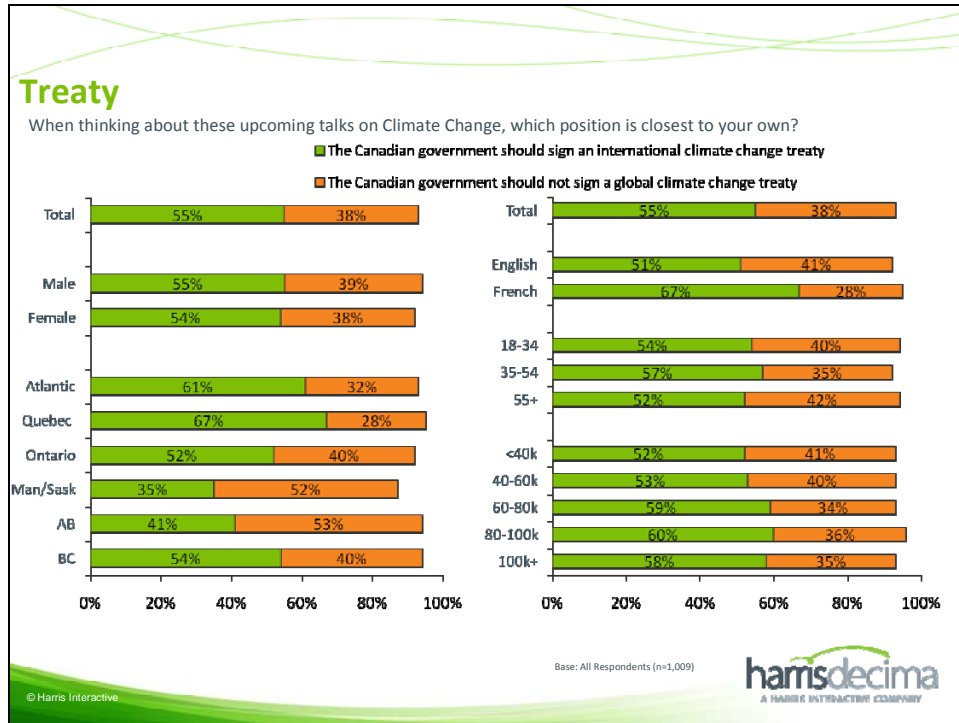
Awareness of the climate change conference was high. A majority of Canadians surveyed (53%) claimed to be aware of the upcoming UN conference on climate change in Copenhagen.

Regionally, Albertans are more likely to be aware of the conference, while respondents from Atlantic Canada are less likely to be aware of it.



STANCE ON A CLIMATE CHANGE TREATY

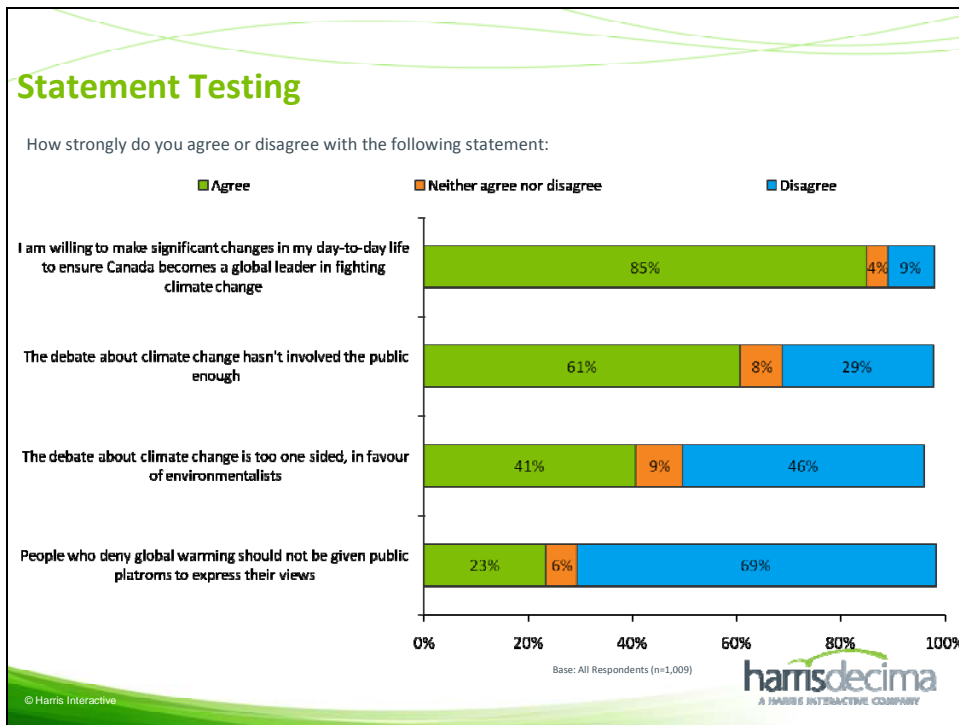
With respect to the upcoming conference, Canadians were asked whether or not they felt that the Canadian government should or should not sign an international climate change treaty. Over half (55%) of respondents felt that the government should, while 38% felt they should not. The proportion agreeing that the government should sign a treaty was highest in Quebec and lowest in the Prairies, with 35% in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and 41% in Alberta.



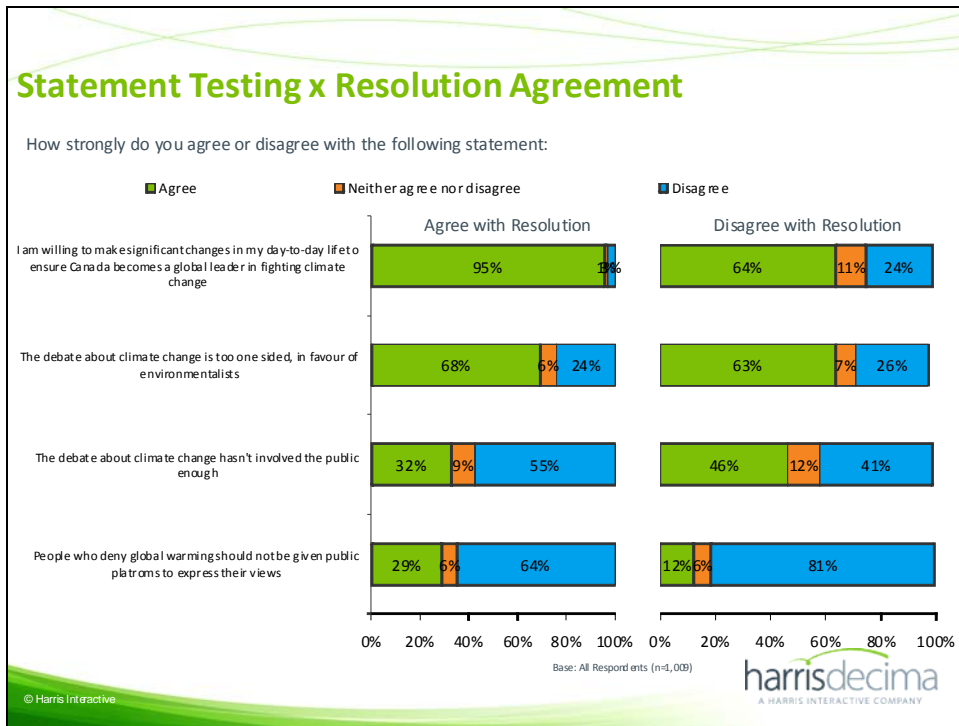
STATEMENTS ABOUT PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT AND DEBATE

Finally, we tested four other statements about personal involvement in rectifying climate change, and about the debate about climate change. Most (85%) agreed that they are willing to make significant changes in their day-to-day life to ensure Canada becomes a global leader in fighting climate change. Three-fifths (61%) felt that the debate about climate change has not involved the public enough.

Opinions are fairly mixed with regards to the debate about climate change being too one sided, in favour of the environmentalist, with 41% agreeing and 46% disagreeing. Less than one quarter (23%) agree that people who deny global warming should not be given public platforms to express their views.



When comparing those who agree with the resolution versus those who disagree we find that those who agree are more likely to be willing to make significant changes in their own lives (95% compared to 64% who disagree). Those who agree with the resolution are also less likely to agree that the debate is too one sided in favour of environmentalists (32% versus 63%), more likely to feel that the debate has not involved the public enough (68% versus 46%), and more likely to feel that those who deny climate change should not be given public platforms (29% versus 12%).



About Harris/Decima

Harris/Decima is one of Canada's most established names in public opinion and market research, with a 25-year track record of innovation and client satisfaction. The company is a full-service consultancy provider offering senior level expertise in public opinion and market research coupled with highly strategic advice on positioning, issues management, marketing and communications with targeted and broad audiences. Harris/Decima offers a wide array of quantitative and qualitative research solutions, including custom telephone and online data collection, omnibus products, extensive panel capabilities, and a full slate of qualitative research options, using both traditional and online platforms.

In 2007, Decima Research merged with Harris Interactive, one of the world's largest research firms. Harris Interactive is one of the research industry's fastest growing enterprises and is a world leader in online panel research and the science that underpins quality online studies. For more information about Harris/Decima, please visit www.harrisdecima.com