

# Survey shows weak trust in Canadian courts on energy projects, climate policy disputes

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Credit: University of Ottawa

The University of Ottawa's Positive Energy program released new survey results showing that a large segment of the Canadian public does not trust the courts to settle disputes over energy projects or climate policy. The survey was conducted by Positive Energy's official pollster, Nanos Research.

Canadians were asked: On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means do not [trust](#)

at all and 10 means trust completely, how much do you trust the courts to settle disputes over government decisions on [energy projects](#)? They were asked the same question for [climate](#) policy. The results are very similar. Only one in three Canadians trust the courts to settle disputes over [energy](#) projects or climate policy (answering between 7 and 10: 31% for energy, 30% for climate). The majority of Canadians answered between 0 and 6 for both questions: one in four do not trust the courts (answering between 0 and 3: 27% for energy; 26% for climate) and about one in three are neutral (scoring between 4 and 6: 31% for energy, 32% for climate). For energy projects, 26% answered between 0 and 3; 31% answered between 4 and 6; 27% answered between 7 and 10; 11% were unsure. For [climate policy](#), 26% answered between 0 and 3; 31% answered between 4 and 6; 27% answered between 7 and 10; 13% were unsure.

Asked why they do or do not trust the courts, the most common responses related to concerns over political interference or bias (27% of responses for energy; 13% for climate). "Respondents who trust the courts on energy and climate change believe the courts are impartial, non-partisan, and have generally done a good job mediating these issues so far. Respondents who do not trust the courts seem particularly concerned about politicization," said Nik Nanos, CEO of Nanos Research and Chair of Positive Energy's Advisory Council.

The survey also asked Canadians about a range of other energy issues, many of which Positive Energy has tracked since 2015. The results show that [public confidence](#) in energy decision making is weak across the board, including on federal-provincial cooperation, developing a long-term national energy vision, balancing local and national interests, and building constructive partnerships with Indigenous peoples. Dissatisfaction on these issues is highest in the Prairies and lowest in Quebec.

"These results show governments have a lot of work to do to build public confidence in energy and climate decision-making," said Professor Monica Gattinger, Chair of Positive Energy and Director, Institute for Science, Society and Policy, University of Ottawa. "We were surprised to see such low levels of trust in the courts. This suggests governments need to put in the work to balance competing interests over energy and climate. Resolving controversies in the courts might not strengthen trust in decisions."

The survey was an RDD dual frame (land- and cell-lines) hybrid telephone and online random survey of 1,025 Canadians, 18 years of age or older, between April 29 and May 3, 2021 as part of a Nanos omnibus survey. The margin of error is 3.1 percentage points plus or minus, 19 times out of 20.

**More information:** [www.uottawa.ca/positive-energy...pdated\\_with\\_tabs.pdf](http://www.uottawa.ca/positive-energy...pdated_with_tabs.pdf)

Provided by University of Ottawa

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