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Keystone the exception to the rule; most infrastructure projects accepted by communities

Despite heightened politicization and media scrutiny surrounding infrastructure projects such as the Keystone XL oil pipeline and several power plants in Ontario, a new poll by Innovative Research Group (INNOVATIVE) has found that a majority of Canadians and Americans support the construction of new infrastructure in their own communities.

Local infrastructure projects supported by majority of Canadians and Americans

As part of its ongoing *Understanding NIMBY* study, INNOVATIVE has been tracking Canadian public opinion on local infrastructure projects since 2006. In 2011, INNOVATIVE increased the scope of its project to include the United States, and asked residents of both countries for their opinions on the local infrastructure projects that had recently been constructed near them.

Both in Canada and the US, most land use developments tested¹ receive permission from the neighbouring community, with two thirds of Canadians (67%) saying they either saw the project being built near them as a good thing for their community and they support it (42%) or that while they don't like the project, they think it is necessary (25%). Three quarters of Americans (77%) felt similarly, either seeing their local project as good for their community (51%) or as necessary, despite disliking it (26%).

NIMBY projects are most widely accepted in the Canadian Prairies and Western United States, with four in five (79% and 81%, respectively) respondents viewing their infrastructure development as either a positive or necessary development for their community. Atlantic Canadians and residents of the Northeastern United States are most likely to oppose their local project, with almost one quarter (22%) of Atlantic Canadians and 15% of respondents living in the Northeastern United States opposing to the construction of their local infrastructure project.

Nationally, electricity projects not seen as better or worse than other infrastructure

Within both Canada and the US, INNOVATIVE found there to be little difference at the national level between support for electricity infrastructure and support for other kinds of infrastructure projects such as roads, landfills, and oil pipelines.

Two thirds of Canadians (66%) believe that the electricity infrastructure project being built near them is either good for their community (41%) or necessary (24%). A similar proportion (69%) of Canadians living near other infrastructure projects saw their local project as either good (44%) or necessary despite not liking it (25%).

¹ Projects investigated in this study include: landfills; new or expanded highways and bridges; hydro power from dams that create large reservoirs; run of hydro power that re-directs stream or river flow; geothermal power; electricity generating plants fuelled by municipal waste, natural gas, or nuclear power; liquefied natural gas storage facilities; high voltage electricity transmission lines; natural gas storage facilities; natural gas pipelines; oil pipelines; wind farms located on land; and wind farms on pillars in the ocean, coastal water or large lakes.



Almost four in five Americans (78%) believe that their local electricity infrastructure project is either good for their community (52%) or necessary (26%). Similarly, almost four in five Americans (77%) living near other forms of infrastructure developments see their local project as either good (50%) or necessary despite not liking it (27%).

Regionally, electricity infrastructure is most accepted in the Canadian Prairies (73%) and American West (86%). A majority (52%) of respondents living near an energy infrastructure development in the Canadian Prairies saw their local project as good, with another 21% feeling their local project was necessary, despite not liking it. More than half (58%) of the respondents living near an energy infrastructure development in the American West saw their local project as good for their community, with another quarter (28%) seeing the project as necessary, despite disliking it.

Ontarians and residents of the American Northeast are most likely to oppose local electricity infrastructure developments, with one fifth (21%) of respondents in Ontario and 15% of respondents in the US Northeast seeing their local electricity infrastructure project as bad for the community and something they oppose.

Methodology

This release includes the results from two online surveys. The total sample included n=1,009 in the US and n=2,762 in Canada.

Using the latest available Statistics Canada and US Department of Statistics Census data, the results of both studies have been weighted according to age, gender and region to ensure a sample representative of the entire adult population of each country. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

Canadian data was collected between September 22 and October 15, 2011, through INNOVATIVE's proprietary research panel, Canada 20/20. Panel members have been recruited by a variety of methods to be broadly representative of the population at large. INNOVATIVE provides each panellist with a unique URL via an email invitation so that only invited panel members are able to complete the survey. Panel members can only complete a particular survey once. An unweighted probability sample of 2,762 would have an estimated margin of error of ± 1.9 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

US data was collected from members of the Springboard America panel between September 26 and 29, 2011. An unweighted probability sample of 1,009 would have an estimated margin of error of ± 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

- 30 -

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