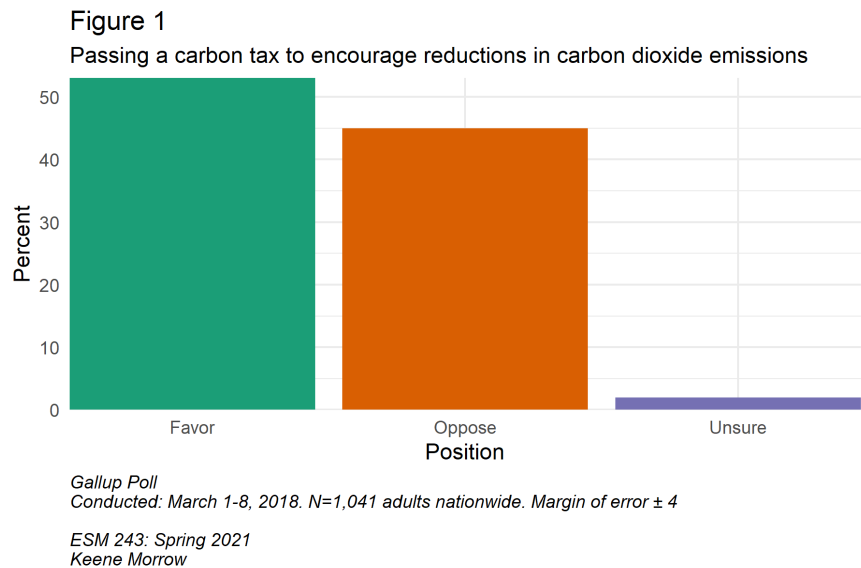
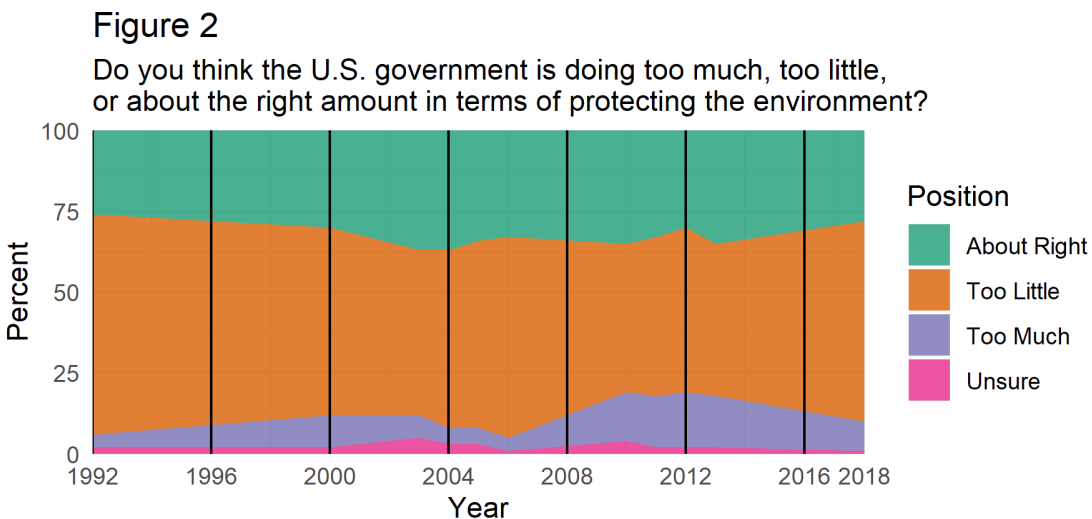


Carbon Tax & Government Environmental Response Poll Review

In a March 2018 Gallup poll, 53% of the 1,041 respondents indicated that they were in favor of "passing a carbon tax to encourage reductions in carbon dioxide emissions" (Figure 1). While Gallup had not previously asked this question, it and several others on potential government environmental policies were added to this iteration of an ongoing poll.



That poll was started in 1992 with one question and expanded to two in 2001. The first question asks participants how they feel the US federal government is doing in its response to environmental issues (Figure 2). In 2018, the number of Americans stating that the federal government was doing too little to address environmental problems hit 62%, the highest since 2006, and the second highest in the history of the poll.



*Gallup Poll
Last Conducted: March 1-8, 2018. N=1,041 adults nationwide. Margin of error ± 4*
Poll Years: 1992, 2000, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2018

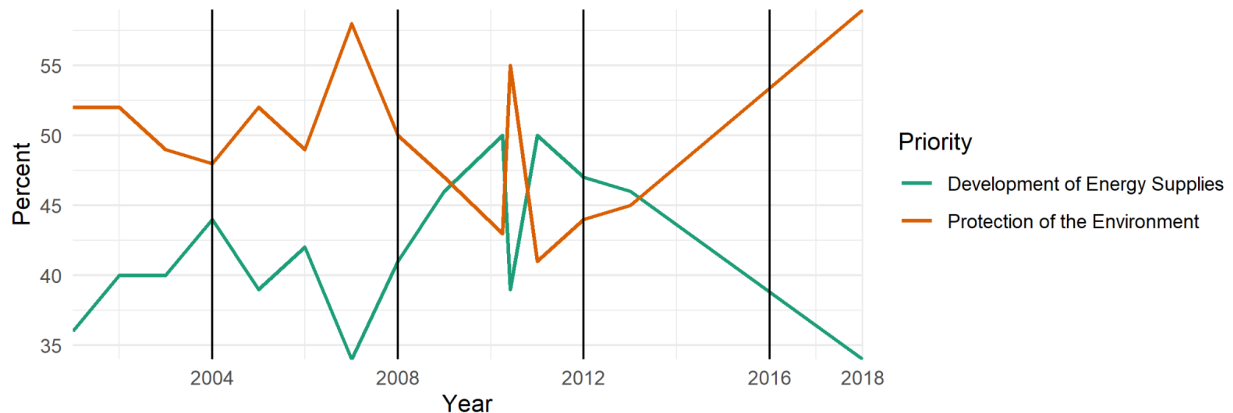
Vertical lines indicate presidential election years.

*ESM 243: Spring 2021
Keene Morrow*

The second poll question asks whether environmental protection or energy production is a higher priority. Figure 3 shows the recent divergence of opinion on this matter following the tumultuous years between 2008 and 2013. In 2018 respondents in favor of prioritizing environmental protection hit an all time high of 59%.

Figure 3

With which one of these statements about the environment and energy production do you most agree? Protection of the environment should be given priority, even at the risk of limiting the amount of energy supplies -- such as oil, gas and coal -- which the United States produces. OR, Development of U.S. energy supplies -- such as oil, gas and coal -- should be given priority, even if the environment suffers to some extent



Gallup Poll

Last Conducted: March 1-8, 2018. N=1,041 adults nationwide. Margin of error ± 4

Poll Years: 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2018

Vertical lines indicate presidential election years.

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The data does not currently exist to support whether interest in a carbon tax correlates with the desire of the public for government action on the environment or with prioritizing environmental protection over energy production due to the nascence of the specified question. However, carbon taxes are often assumed to be detrimental to industry despite research indicating that there is little to no impact felt in that sector and that the costs of a carbon tax, like all regressive taxes, are most acutely felt by low-income populations (Martin 2014, Rott 2021, Stiglitz & Stern 2017). By extending these ideas to the ongoing poll data, it is within the bounds of reason to assume that the 53% of respondents who supported a carbon tax fall within the 59% of respondents who prioritized environmental protection and the 62% of respondents who believe that the US federal government is doing too little to address environmental problems.

Polls are inherently governed by the prior knowledge of respondents and gain their power from representing the snap judgment of the individual polled. There have been many carbon tax bills proposed at the US federal level since the first in 1992. The content of these proposals ranges from the 2017 bill put forth by conservative legislators and former cabinet secretaries James Baker and Henry Paulson (Nature 2017) to the 10 Democrat-proposed bills put forth during the 116th Congress (Ye 2020). The Gallup poll does not specify which proposal, with all their individual

nuance for addressing the regressive nature of the tax, what is covered by the tax, what might happen to subsidies, and the dozen other considerations necessary when proposing a carbon tax bill, though it seems unlikely that the average American would be familiar with such minor proposals.

To fully understand the trajectory of public opinion on a carbon tax, further polling is necessary. Yet, there is increased awareness of climate change and support for action, including the Biden Administration's recently released climate action plan (White House 2021). Carbon taxes are an extremely efficient way of influencing emissions and can be implemented with equity in mind to achieve dramatic changes to the behaviors that result in greenhouse gas emission (Metcalf 2009). In combination with the majority support of a carbon tax reported in 2018 and the current federal political climate, it is not without reason to expect that a carbon tax be implemented in the next few years so long as it is negotiated with intent to counter the repercussions of a regressive tax.

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