Vermont Water Cooler - October Poll

Updated 11/27/2019

Quick facts:

Survey date: 10/8-10/2019

Survey Population: 16,013

Sample size: 539

Method: IVR

Number of questions (nom): 3

Number of question (tot): 5

Weighted for: Age & Gender

Web Version: Yes

Description of purpose:

The Vermont Water Cooler October survey is intended to gather Vermonter's thoughts on the importance of climate change policy in Vermont and the way they view severity of the issue. To this end, the Water Cooler team developed a survey that will help to inform policy makers about Vermonter's take on climate change issues.

Methodology:

The poll was conducted by IVR phone call to landline telephones on **October 8th and 10th of 2019** (see Appendix A for full list of questions). Questions were presented to respondents in a multi-choice format in order to standardize results. Instructions for entering the intended response was included with each question. For example, "Press 1 if you think that…."

The survey population of **16,000** households was randomly selected from Vermont's registered voter list. The phone list was limited to just 802 area code numbers and deduped so individual households were not called multiple times.
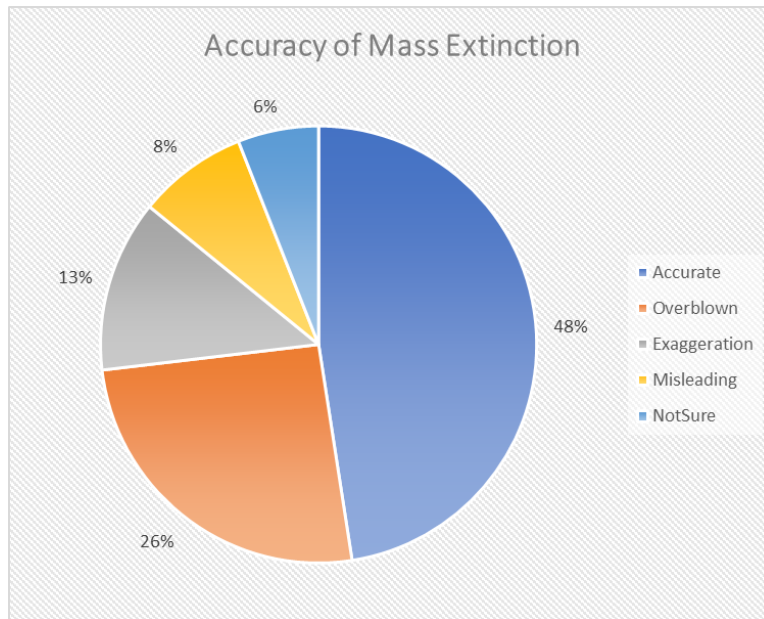
The final number of respondents to the survey totaled **539.** The survey responses were then weighed for age and gender using a raking method to compensate for oversampling in either of these demographics.

An accompanying web survey was launched on vtwatercooler.com on **October 7th, 2019**. Data from that survey is not included in these results.
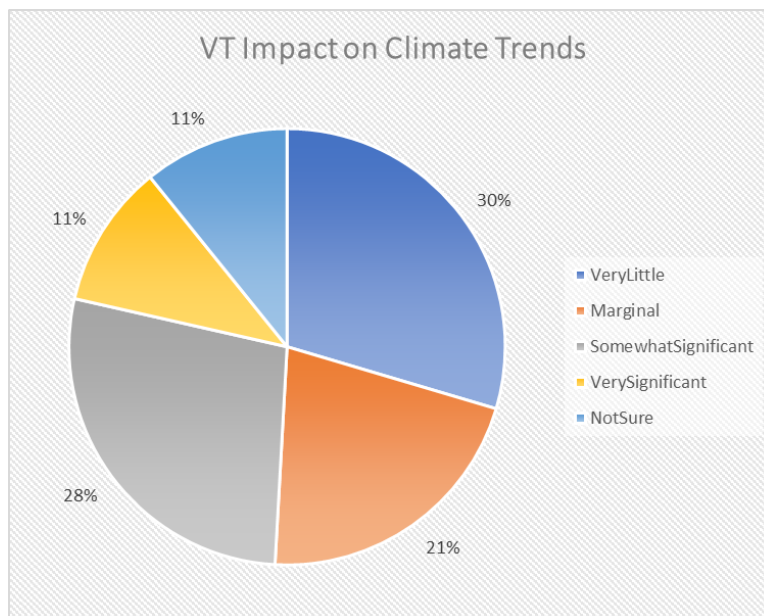
Survey Results:

Perhaps the clearest result of the whole survey was that Vermonters view climate change as an existential threat. Nearly half of Vermonters believe we are on a path to mass extinction. Of the other half, the majority think that mass extinction claim may be overblown, but didn't dismiss the threat posed by climate change.
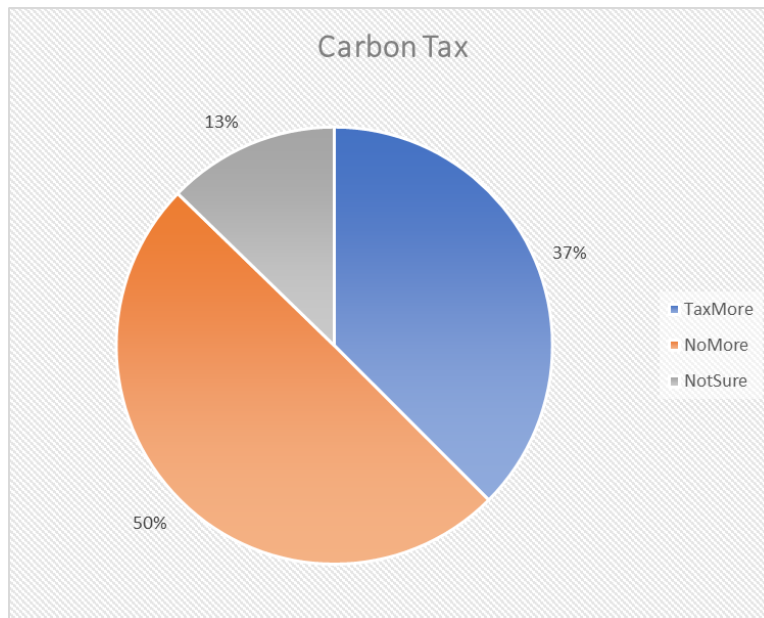

Despite how important respondents think climate change is, they recognize that the state of Vermont may have a limited impact in the global fight against carbon emissions. 51% of respondents thought the state would have marginal or very little impact on climate change, with only 11% thought we might have a very significant impact.

Also, despite the clear support found in the first question for legislative action on climate change and the existential threat recognized in the third question, respondents turned away from a carbon tax as the solution by a margin of 13%.

Summary:

There is little doubt this is an issue on Vermonter's minds. Nearly three quarters of those surveyed viewed climate change as a major issue that could lead to mass extinction. Even with this in mind, Vermonters are reluctant to raise taxes on energy sources that contribute to carbon pollution. Half of respondents opposed any kind of tax increase on these products.

Despite the gravity of the issue, most respondents were realistic about the impacts efforts made in Vermont would have on the global issue. Only 11% thought the state would have a very significant impact on climate change.

As Legislators prepare for the 2020 legislative session, it would be prudent for them to understand Vermonter's views on climate change and the gravity of the situation but also respect economic and environmental realities.

Appendix A

Survey questions and allowed responses.

1. **Do you believe statements like "we are headed toward mass extinction" as a result of climate change are accurate or an exaggeration?**
   a. Accurate
   b. A little overblown
   c. Probably an exaggeration
   d. Misleading
   e. Not sure

2. **How much of an impact do you believe efforts by Vermont to curb greenhouse gas emissions will have on future climate trends?**
   a. Very little
   b. Marginal
   c. Somewhat Significant
   d. Very Significant
   e. Not sure

3. **Do you support higher taxes on fossil fuels such as gasoline, diesel, and home heating fuels that contribute to carbon emissions to discourage their use?**
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Not sure
   d.

4. **What range most closely matches your current age? (age)**
   a. 18-30
   b. 31-45
   c. 46-60
   d. 61-75
   e. 76 or older

5. **What gender do you identify as? (gender)**
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Non-Binary