

Urban Congestion

Public Opinion on Possible Solutions

Conducted for the Ecofiscal Commission

Canada's 4 Largest Urban Markets

ABACUS DATA



Methodology

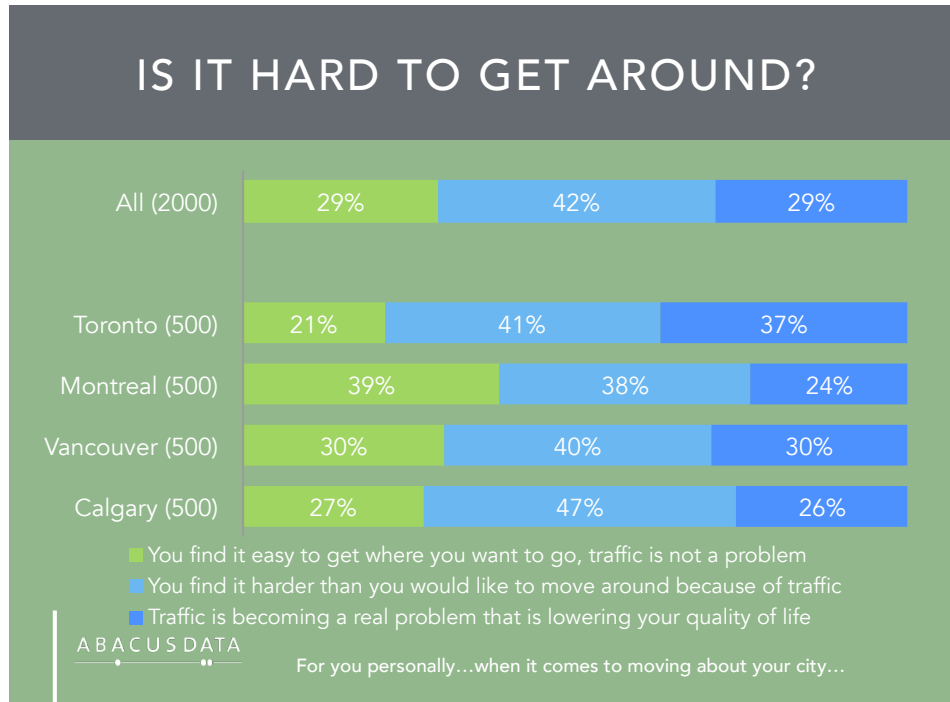
The survey was conducted online with 2,000 Canadians aged 18 and over from July 3 to 6, 2015 living in the Census Metropolitan Areas of Toronto, Montreal, Calgary, and Vancouver. 500 interviews were conducted in each city. A random sample of panelists was invited to complete the survey from a large representative panel of Canadians, recruited and managed by Research Now, one of the world's leading provider of online research samples.

The Marketing Research and Intelligence Association policy limits statements about margins of sampling error for most online surveys. The margin of error for a comparable probability-based random sample of the same size is +/- 2.2%, 19 times out of 20. The data were weighted according to census data to ensure that the sample matched each CMA's population according to age, gender, educational attainment, and subregion. Totals may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

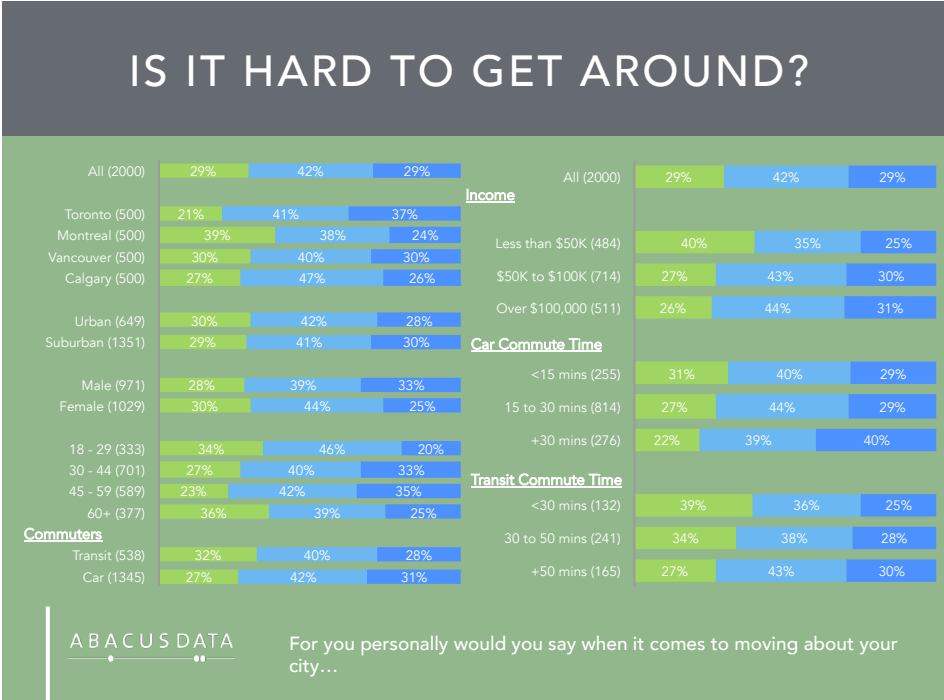
The Problem

Across Canada's four largest urban markets (Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto and Montreal) majorities of those surveyed said that they find traffic is a problem affecting their ability to get around and in many cases lowering their quality of life.

Those in the GTA perceive the problem as most severe, where fully 41% said that they "find it harder than they would like to move around because of traffic" and another 37% went further and said "traffic is becoming a real problem that is lowering their quality of life."

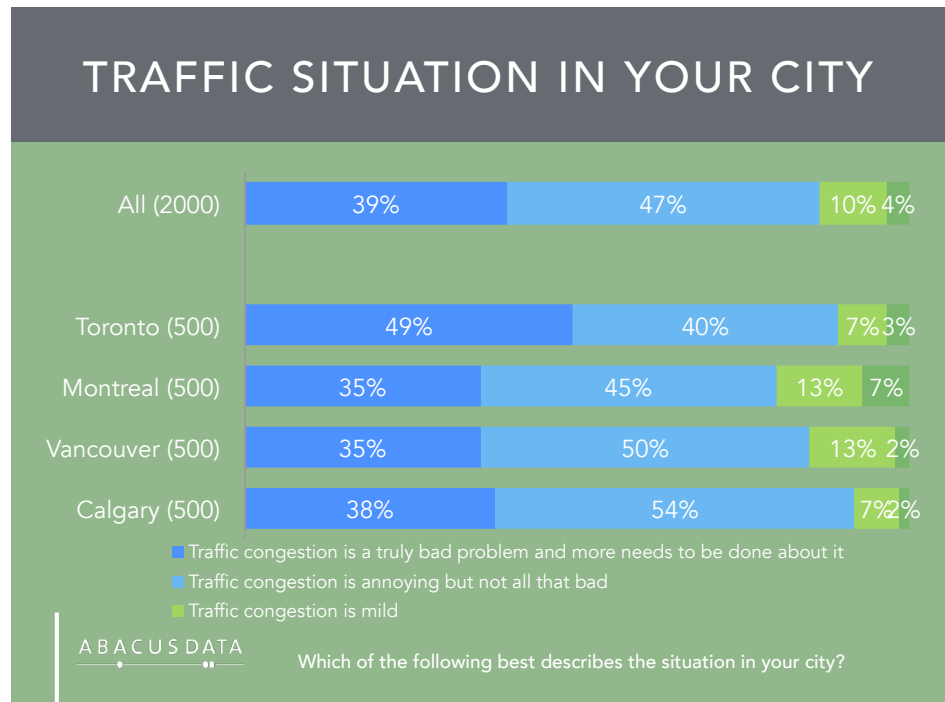


This problem is experienced by majorities in urban and suburban areas, both genders, all age groups, all income groups, and those who commute by car or transit. The longer the reported daily commute time - the more frustration is evident.



While majorities indicate a level of frustration in all four markets, the sense of urgency attached to solutions is mixed. Across the markets, 39% say “traffic congestion is truly bad and more needs to be done about it”, while 40% said “traffic congestion is annoying but not all that bad”. Urgency is highest in Toronto, where 49% say “truly bad”.

This suggests that, with the possible exception of in Toronto, the issue of traffic has become a constant irritant for many, but may not yet be at a tipping point where people are demanding urgent or disruptive policy solutions.

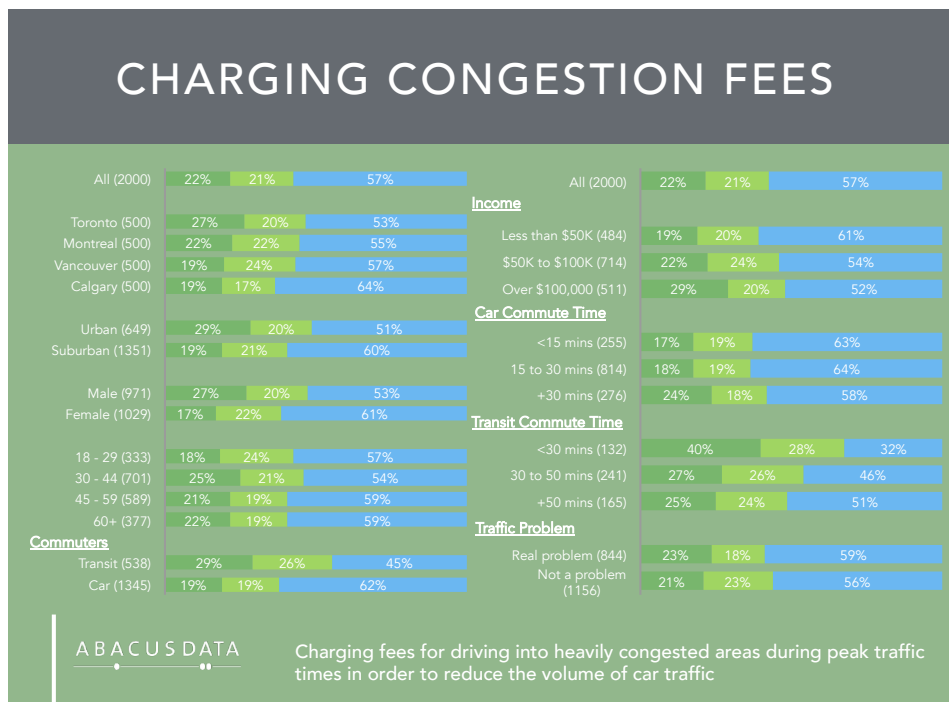
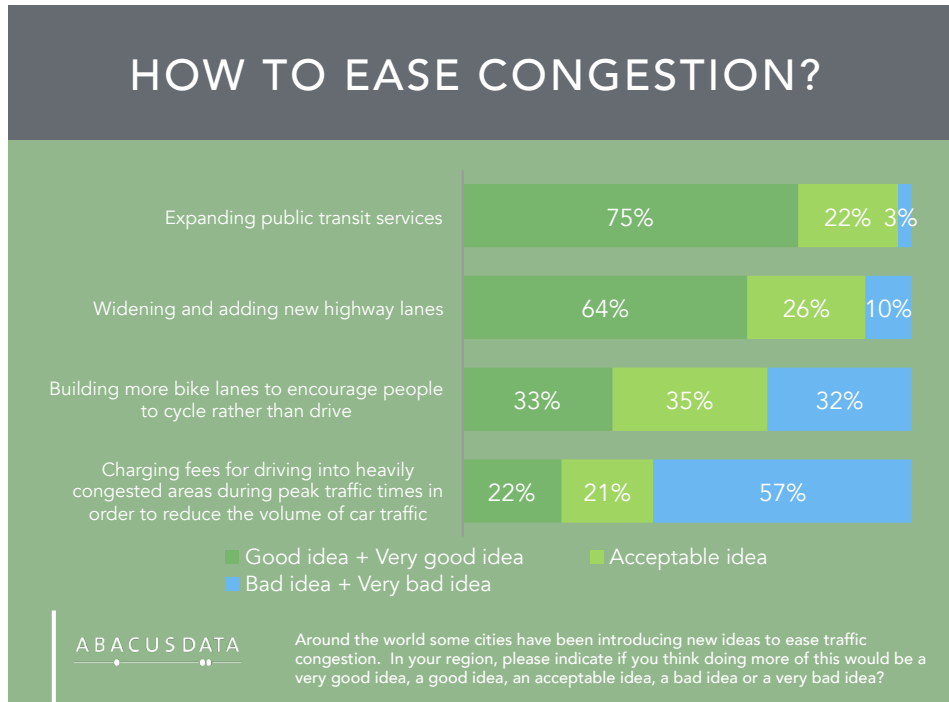


Possible Solutions

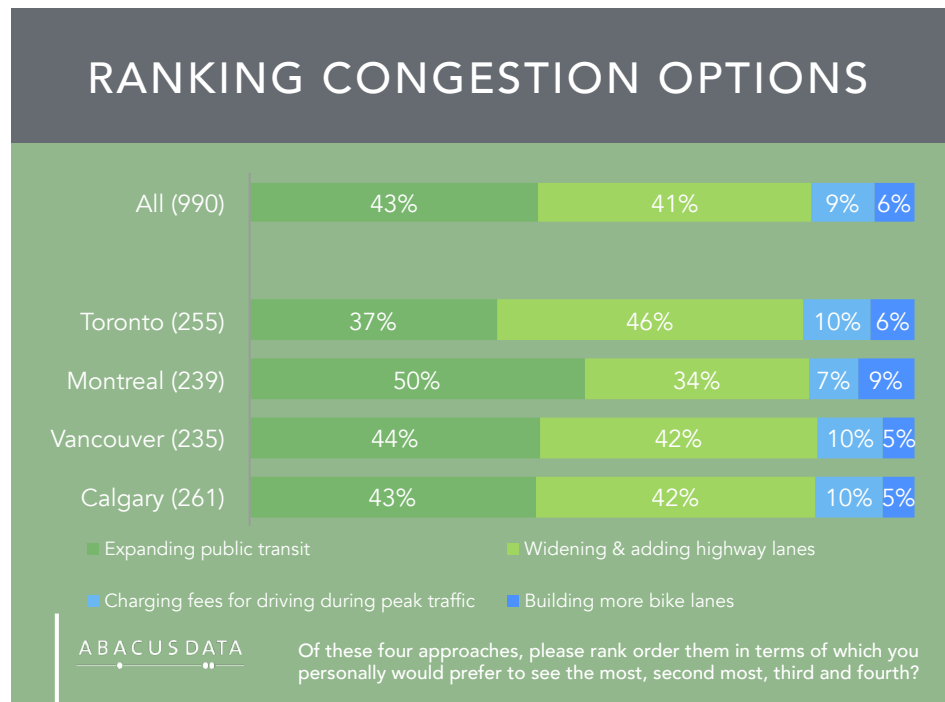
When probed on how best to alleviate congestion, most people tend automatically to gravitate towards solutions that expand capacity, rather than reduce demand.

Fully 75% say expanding transit services is a good idea and another 22% say it is an acceptable idea. Almost as much support is evident for widening and adding new highway lanes (64% good idea, 26% acceptable). Bike lanes and congestion pricing ("charging fees for driving into heavily congested areas during peak traffic times in order to reduce the volume of traffic) find lower levels of support and more resistance.

On congestion reducing fees in particular, 22% say this would be a good idea, 21% an acceptable idea, while 57% indicate resistance. Higher levels of support are evident in Toronto, among those who live in urban rather than suburban areas, higher income households, and transit users, and especially transit users that have short commutes (indicating that they live in the downtown areas). The patterns suggest that support is higher than average among those who think they would personally experience no cost and/or less congestion as a result of this sort of pricing concept.

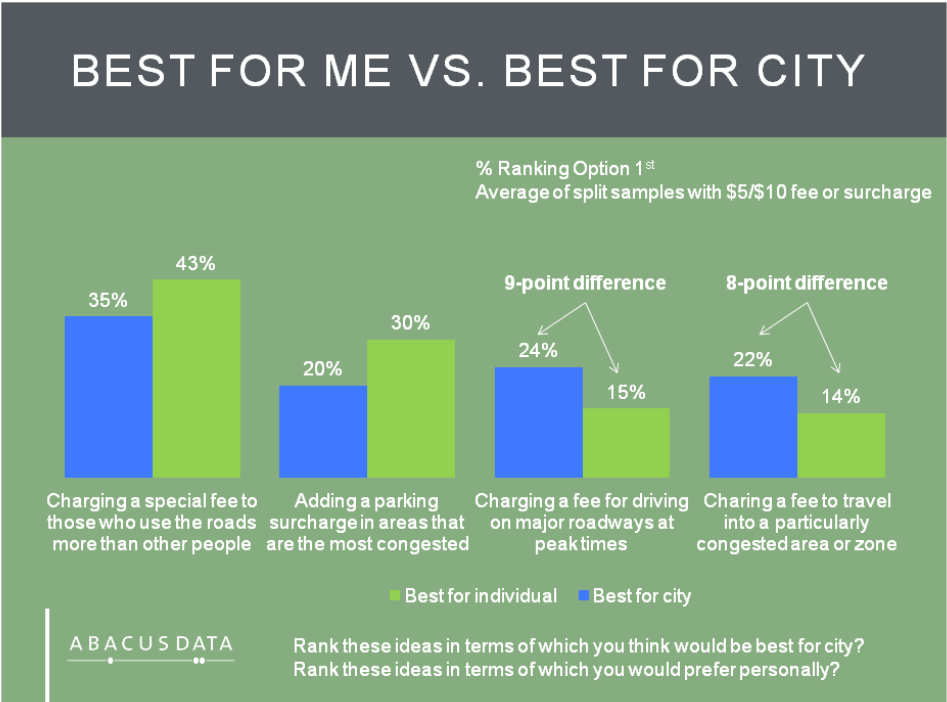


When asked to rank order the solutions they would most favour for alleviating congestion, pricing and bike lanes fall far below expanding capacity. This is the case in all four markets tested.

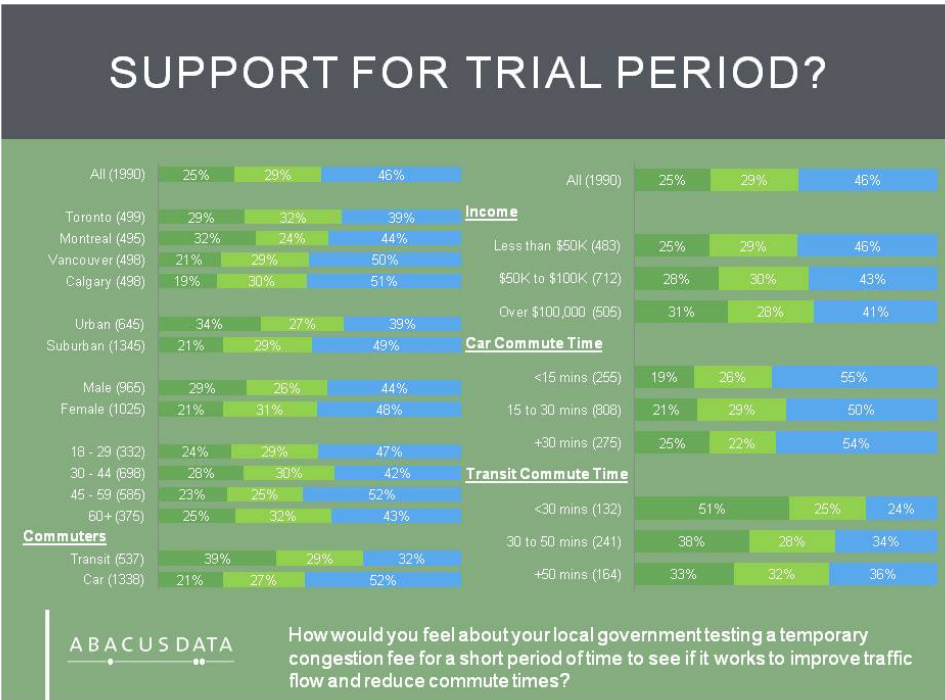
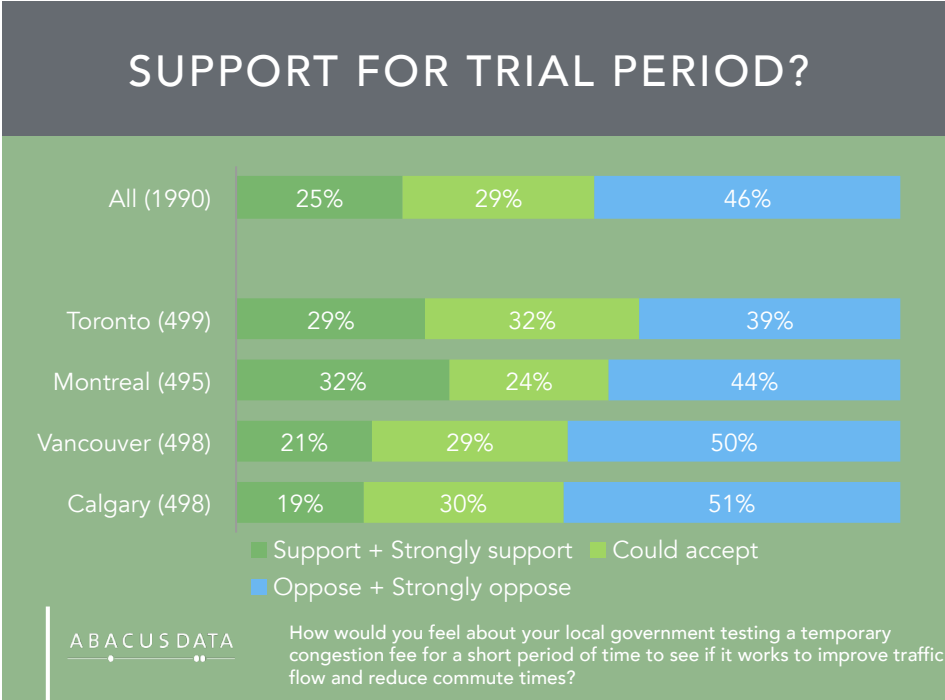


We asked people to consider which option they would prefer for themselves and which they think would be best for their city. This revealed that people prefer approaches that target heavier users of roads and those who choose to park in congested areas rather than those options that might impact them personally. When it comes to ideas that might be best for the city they live in, people tend to be more inclined to imagine that all of the solutions tested could have value, led by a frequent driver-pays more approach.

There is also a difference of opinion between what is best for individuals and what is best for the city. When it comes to charging a fee for driving on major roadways at peak times there is a 9-point gap between those who say it is the best option for them personally versus those who say it is best for their city. A similar gap exists on preferences for a congestion charge for traveling into a congested area or zone.

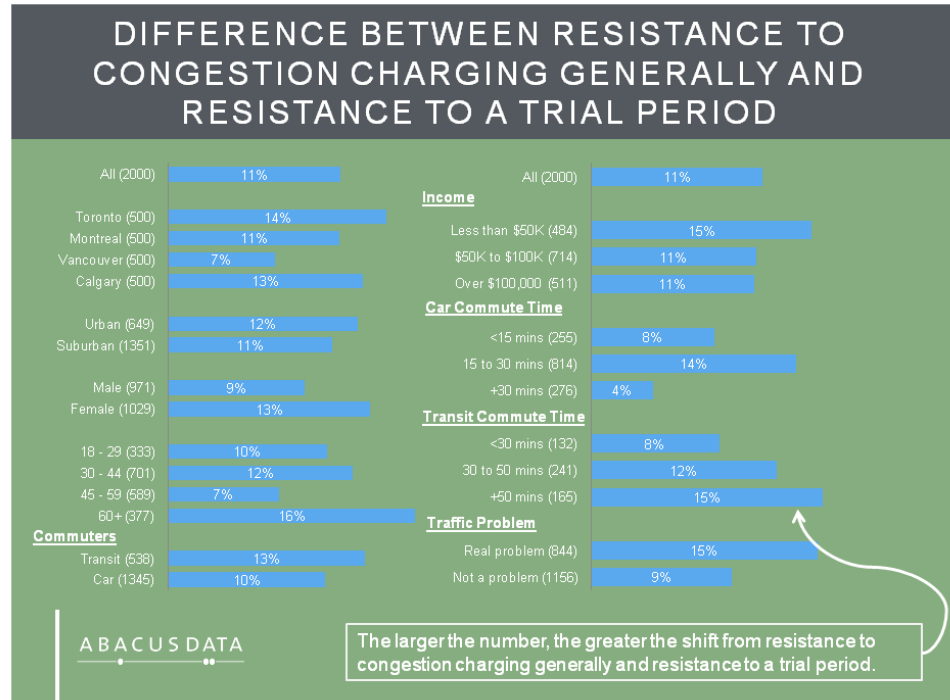


While the data in this study show some instinctive resistance by a majority to the idea of congestion pricing, when asked how they would feel about the idea being introduced on a trial basis, resistance dropped by 11 points to a situation where a small majority (larger in Toronto) say they would support or could accept this idea.



The idea of a trial period had a particular effect of reducing resistance to congestion charging to those living in Toronto and Calgary, women, those aged 60 and over, and those earning less than \$50,000 per year. There was also

reduced resistance among those whose commute time is between 15 to 30 minutes and those who consider traffic to be a real problem in their community.



Arguments about Congestion Pricing

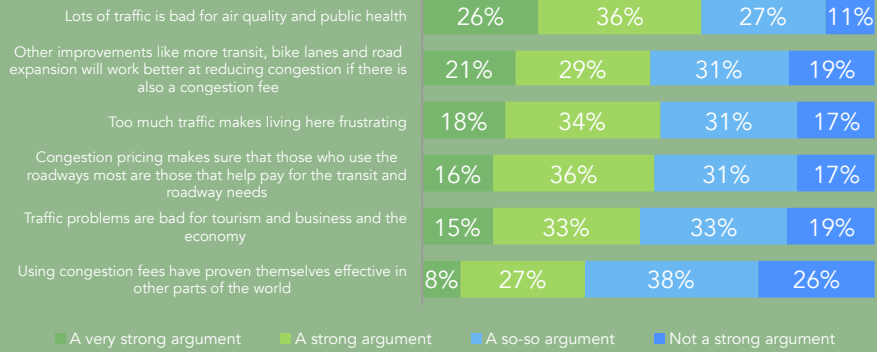
Respondents were shown a list of possible arguments for and against congestion charging and asked to provide some reaction to each one.

The strongest argument in favour of congestion pricing stems from the belief that too much traffic is bad for air quality and public health.

The second best argument is that congestion pricing will work best if it is linked with other solutions including those that add capacity. The weakest of the arguments tested is that congestion fees have worked in other places where they have been tried – which may be a reflection of the fact that people are unfamiliar with that track record.

Among the arguments tested against congestion pricing the strongest were that taxes were already high enough, that pricing would unfairly harm those with less money and that it might not actually work unless there are more viable alternatives to driving than there are right now.

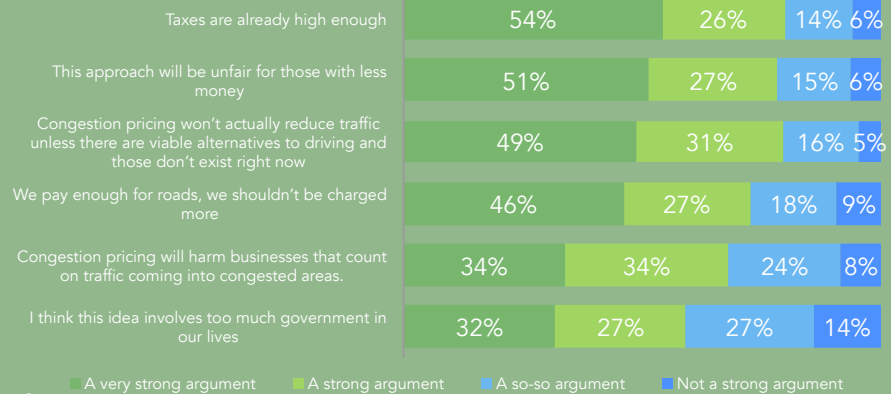
ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF CONGESTION PRICING



ABACUS DATA

What do you think about each of the following arguments IN FAVOUR of using congestion pricing indicate if you think it is a very strong argument, a strong argument, a so-so argument, or not a strong argument.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST CONGESTION PRICING



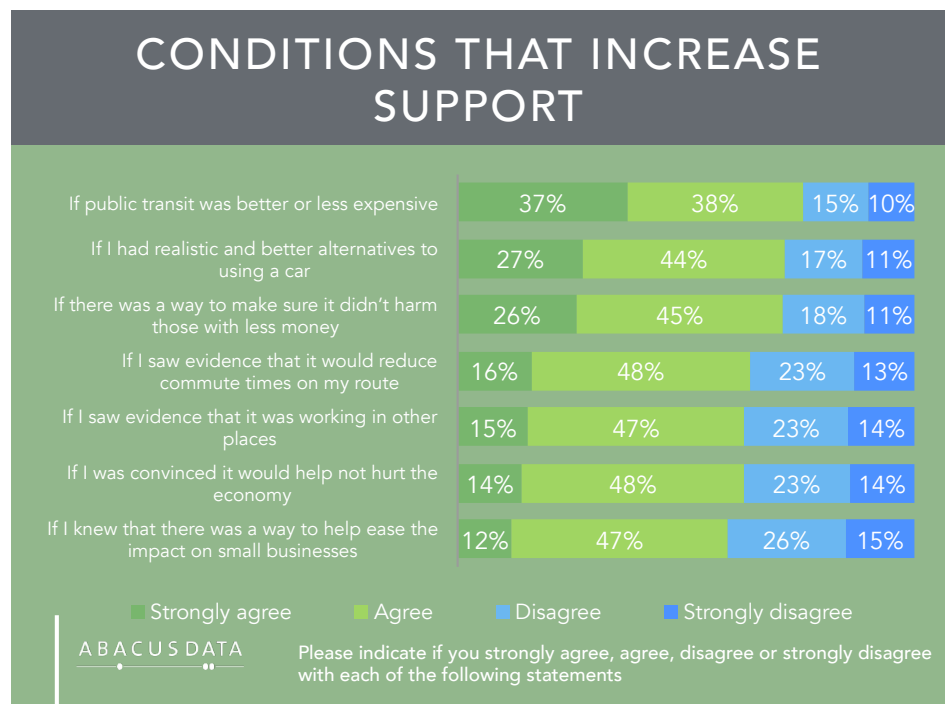
ABACUS DATA

What do you think about each of the following arguments AGAINST using congestion pricing indicate if you think it is a very strong argument, a strong argument, a so-so argument, or not a strong argument.

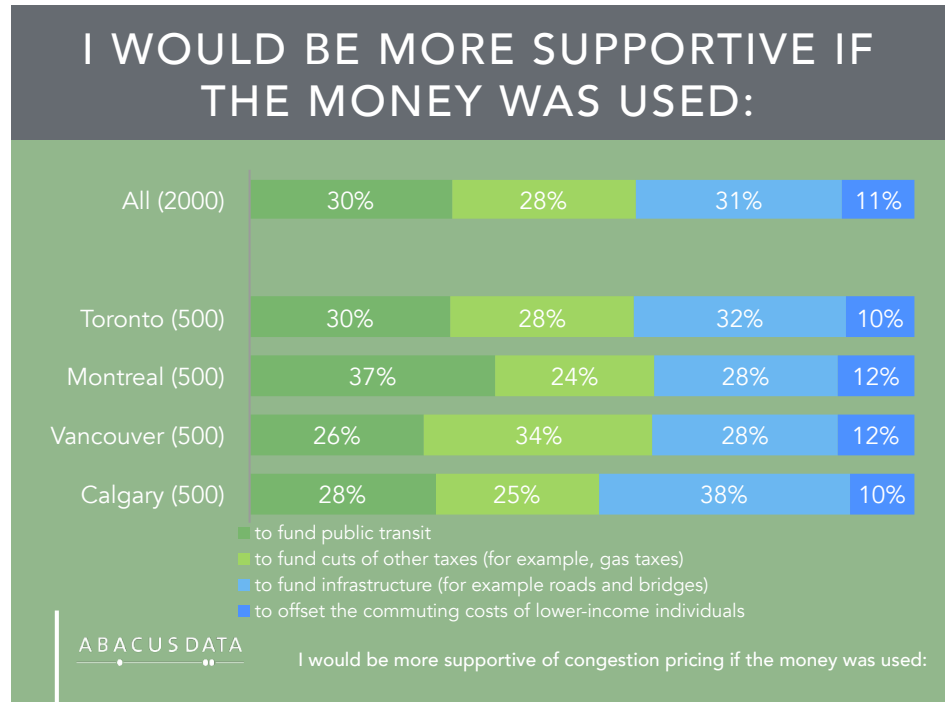
To round out our understanding of public opinion, we also tested a number of propositions that measured what might make people feel more inclined to support the idea of congestion pricing. The results showed that majorities of

those surveyed, despite having initial resistance to the idea, believe that they could be more supportive of the idea if:

- Public transit was better or less expensive (75% would be more supportive)
- If I had a realistic and better alternative to a car (71% more supportive)
- If there was a way to make sure it didn't harm those with less money (71%)
- If I saw it would reduce commute times for me (64%)
- If I saw evidence that it was working in other places (62%)
- If I thought it would help not hurt the economy (62%)
- If the impact on small business could be eased (59%)



Finally, different people have different preferences when it comes to how to deal with the revenue raised by a congestion price. Roughly equal numbers would prefer the money go to fund infrastructure like roads and bridges, to fund public transit, and returned to people in the form of other tax cuts.



Conclusions

Significant numbers of people in Canada’s four largest cities are finding that traffic is a growing problem that is affecting their ability to move around and their quality of life as well.

For many people the problem is an irritant but hasn’t yet reached the point at which it is an urgent situation demanding policy solutions. Toronto is closer to that tipping point than the other cities in this sample.

The tendency of most people is to favour solutions that increase capacity to move people but the results show that people are inclined to consider a mixture of different ideas that can improve the alternatives to driving into congested areas, as well as encourage people to use alternatives through some kind of congestion fee. Resistance to congestion pricing would be significant, unless it were paired with other measures, and people were reassured about how risks would be mitigated and provided with evidence that it has been useful in other jurisdictions.