

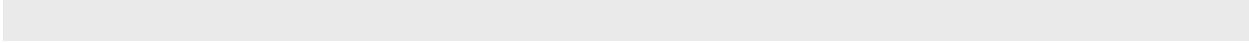
Is Canada flunking climate? The picture isn't great, but there might be a way out



Mark Carney attends COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland, in 2021 as UN special envoy on climate action and finance. Carney now leads Canada through a 'climate policy transition period,' said Debora Van Nijnatten, a net-zero policy expert at Wilfrid Laurier University. (Jean-François Bisson/CBC)

Canada ranked second last in climate and environmental performance among "Global West" countries and 29th in the world, according to the Environmental Performance Index (EPI), released in July by the Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy, the Yale Center for Geospatial Solutions and Columbia University.

The ranking uses 47 environmental indicators from growth of carbon emissions to rates of habitat protection compiled from datasets published between 2022 and early 2026.



EPI lead researcher Zach Wendling told CBC News the index aims to arm people with data to spark deeper conversations and hold their governments accountable.

Why Canada ranked so poorly

Canada scored 57.78 out of 100. The average score among 22 “Global West” countries was 64.74 and the global average (177 countries) was 39.57. The highest score went to Estonia, at 74.79, helped by significant cuts to greenhouse gas emissions from shale oil power generation.

Wendling said Canada was weakest in climate change, protected lands and fishing.

How Canada ranks on various environmental scorecards

Country	EPI rank (out of 177)	CCPI rank (out of 67)*	Climate action
Estonia	1	18	
Luxembourg	2	8	
United Kingdom	3	5	Insuffici
Finland	4	29	
Netherlands	5	10	
Germany	6	22	Insuffici
France	7	21	
Norway	8	11	Almost suf
Sweden	9	13	
Canada	29	61	Highly insu

Additional 168 rows not shown.

** CCPI did not rank any country in the top three, suggesting no country is doing enough to prevent d climate change.*

Canada ranked 45th on the EPI's overarching category for climate change policy, which includes indicators related to emissions trends, such as carbon dioxide and nitrogen monoxide. Canada ranked 133rd in greenhouse gas emissions trend per capita. The score of 24.26 was well below a "Global West" average of 44.87, but was 7.65 points better than Canada would have done 10 years ago, according to the EPI's calculations.

Wending said many of Canada's scores in marine and terrestrial habitat protection and emissions trends have increased. Though the improvements were small, he said this "shows that change is possible."

Canada's worst ranking was 162nd in the risk to biodiversity from pesticide pollution in agriculture.

How other countries are doing better

Estonia earned top honours on the EPI due mainly to cutting down shale oil power generation, which brought down the country's greenhouse gas emissions by 40 per cent, according to the [EPI's report](#). The country has set a target to use only renewables for electricity by 2030 and be [carbon neutral by 2050](#).

"For years, we've been pushing countries to pick the low-hanging fruit," Wendling said. "Shutting down your dirtiest and oldest generation technology would be like an apple the size of a beach ball right at your knees."

Wendling said Estonia's massive climb — equivalent to 23.22 points over 10 years — is a one-time outlier, so they need to reach higher. Their lowest scores came in fishing, agriculture and forestry-related indicators.

Other strong performers include Denmark (eighth on the EPI) and Norway (11th). Denmark scored well on most emissions indicators while Norway was a leader in environmental health and preventing grassland conversion.

Debora Van Nijnatten, a professor in environmental and net zero policy at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ont., said EU countries likely fare better on scorecards because they have strong statutory frameworks and regulatory standards surrounding the environment.

The [European Green Deal](#) includes a Climate Law that mandates carbon neutrality by 2050 and goals to reduce emissions by 35 per cent by 2030 and 90 per cent by 2040. The EU also has an emissions trading system and a Net-Zero Industry Act.

'A lot of room for improvement'

Wendling pointed out two-thirds of countries listed on the EPI have made improvements over the past 10 years. However, even among the top countries, "there's still a lot of room for improvement."

This is the latest in a run of bad climate results for Canada, which came 61st out of 76 countries on the [2026 Climate Change Performance Index](#) and scored a rating of "highly insufficient" in [Climate Action Tracker's November 2025 report](#).

Since the data was compiled for the latest EPI rankings, Prime Minister Mark Carney has [nixed the consumer carbon price](#) and said [emissions will rise](#). According to [the Canadian Climate Policy Inventory](#), more policies ended or allocated their funding than were introduced in 2025.

Van Nijnatten said she would not be surprised to see Canada's scores fall on the EPI and other scorecards in the next few years.

She added Canada was a leader on climate change previously but now, it needs to set new goals.

"We're in a climate policy transition period," she said. "We get some faint outlines of what the Carney government would like to focus on, but it's not clear what that new strategy is going to look like yet."

The EPI researchers do not prescribe solutions for boosting countries' rankings but Wendling has one overarching suggestion.

"The one-size-fits-all advice we can give to countries is to make policymaking more data-driven."

— *Mitchell Fox*

