



PUBLIC OPINION ON MARINE PROTECTED AREAS



OCTOBER 2016

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



In 2016, WWF-Canada commissioned a survey from Environics Research to find out more about Canadians' opinions about marine protected areas. The following results are based on a survey conducted with a sample of 1,655 Canadians (aged 18 and over) from September 27 to October 7, 2016.

- Canadians value oceans, which is evident in the extent to which they see oceans as an important way to reduce humans' environmental impact. Interestingly, this is not necessarily based on specific knowledge about the benefits of oceans: most Canadians are aware that oceans moderate temperature and weather patterns, but only minorities understand the major role that oceans play in absorbing greenhouse gas emissions or producing the oxygen we breathe.
- The public is more optimistic than pessimistic about the health of Canada's oceans, although few express certainty about their state (i.e., giving ratings of "excellent" or "poor"). Furthermore, a majority of almost six in ten believe ocean health is deteriorating. There has been no significant change in these perceptions since 2012.
- Seven in ten Canadians believe the ocean is not just one body of water but that unique areas can be protected from environmental damage. Canada is felt to be doing a better job at ocean protection than other countries; views are more divided as to whether Canada is doing better, the same or worse at protecting our oceans compared to protecting our land.
- When asked about their general orientation, almost three-quarters strongly prioritize protection of certain parts of our oceans so they can continue to support the economy and jobs in coastal communities, rather than allowing industrial activities in all parts of oceans. Not surprisingly then, there is overwhelming support for marine protected areas: 98 percent support designating certain areas of the ocean within Canadian territorial waters as MPAs, including more than six in ten (63%) who strongly support it.
- There is very limited knowledge of what percentage of Canada's oceans are currently designated as MPAs. When told that MPAs currently cover about one percent of our ocean area, most people (87%) think this is too low.
- Canadians clearly distinguish between acceptable and non-acceptable activities within MPAs. They are most likely to say scientific research (97%), non-motorized water sports (91%) and eco-tourism (87%) should be allowed, followed by recreational fishing (66%). By comparison, strong majorities of eight in ten or more oppose oil and gas activities, bottom trawling and dumping within MPAs.
- In light of these views, there is strong support for minimum standards: nine in ten (91%) Canadians support a ban on mining and oil and gas development and closing 50 percent of each site to fishing (including half who strongly support it). Moreover, most of these supporters continue to hold this view even when told that taxes may have to increase to replace lost government revenue from less oil and gas development.
- When making decisions about MPAs, Canadians believe most emphasis should be on the scientific evidence. However, they also say at least some importance should be placed on hearing from the various parties involved, including people in coastal communities, Indigenous peoples, commercial fishing and marine shipping and transportation companies and environmental groups. The exception is oil and gas companies, with only four in ten who say they should be an important information source.

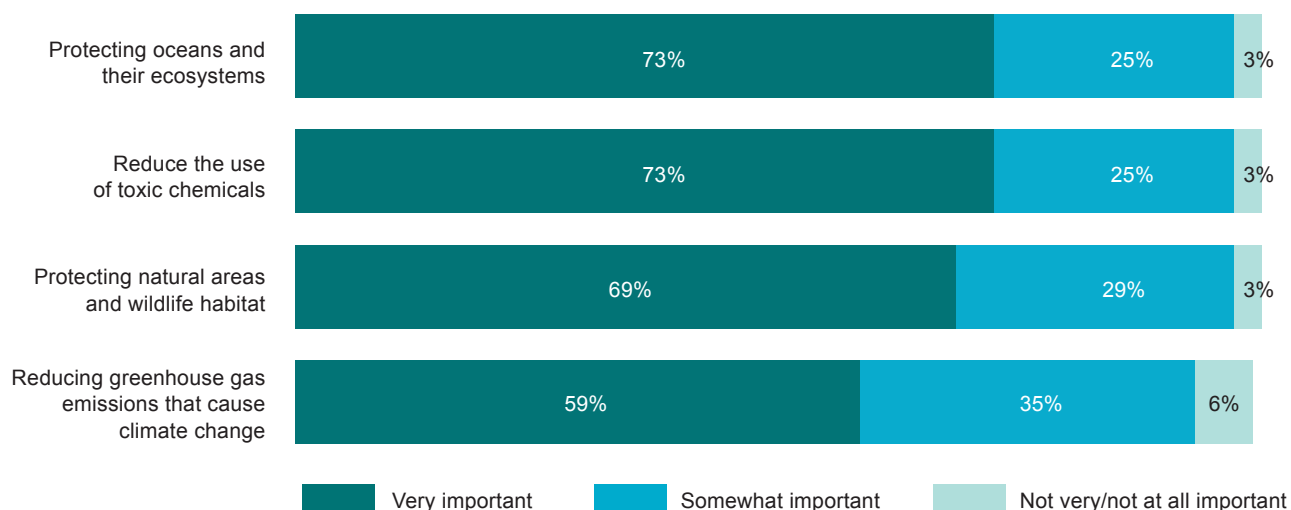
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REDUCING HUMAN IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Ocean protection and reducing the use of toxic chemicals rank highest as ways to reduce human impact on the environment.

Among the range of possible things humans can do to reduce our impact on the environment, how important do you consider each of the following?



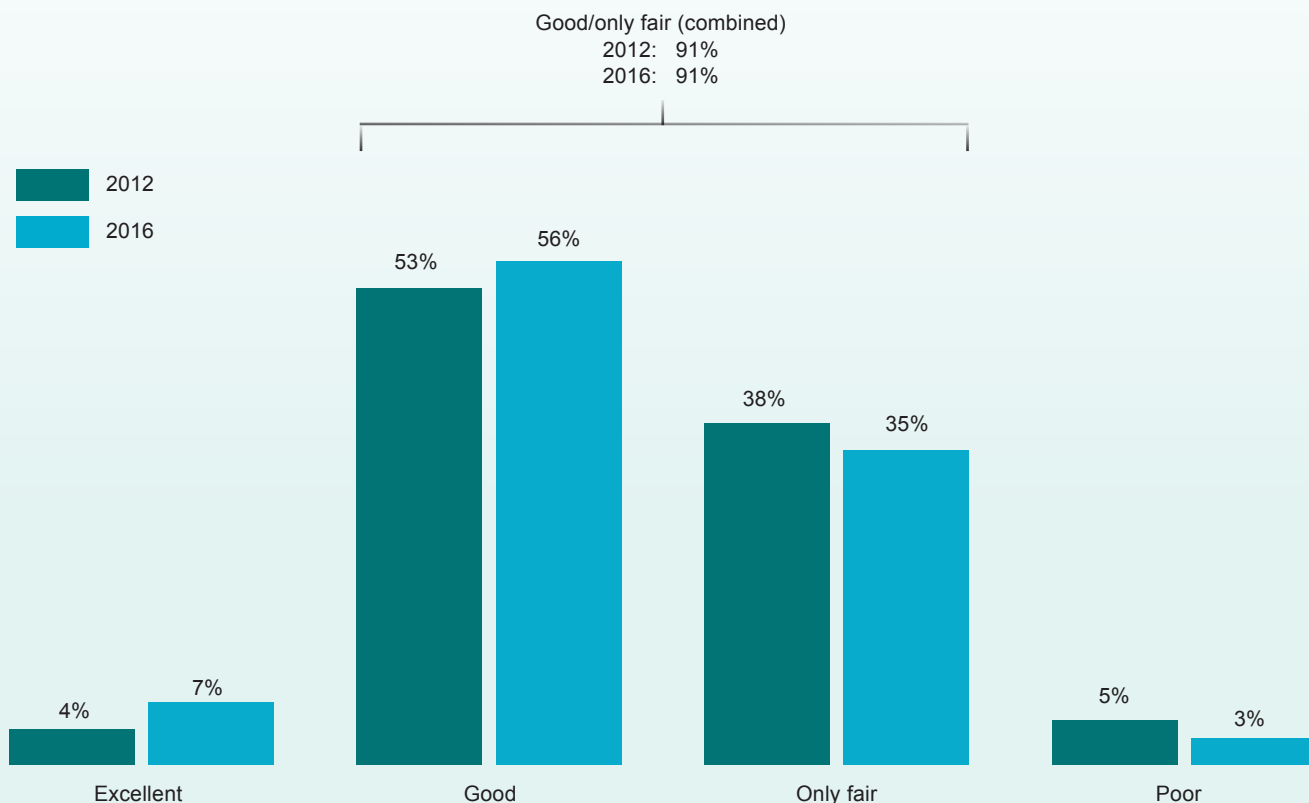
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PERCEPTIONS OF THE HEALTH OF CANADA'S OCEANS

Perceptions of Canada's ocean health have not changed much since 2012; the large majority rate it as good to fair, suggesting a fair degree of uncertainty.

Canada has 7.1 million square kilometres of ocean environment, an area equivalent to 70% of its land mass. From what you know or have heard, how would you rate the health of Canada's oceans, that is, those parts of the Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic Oceans that border Canada's coastline?

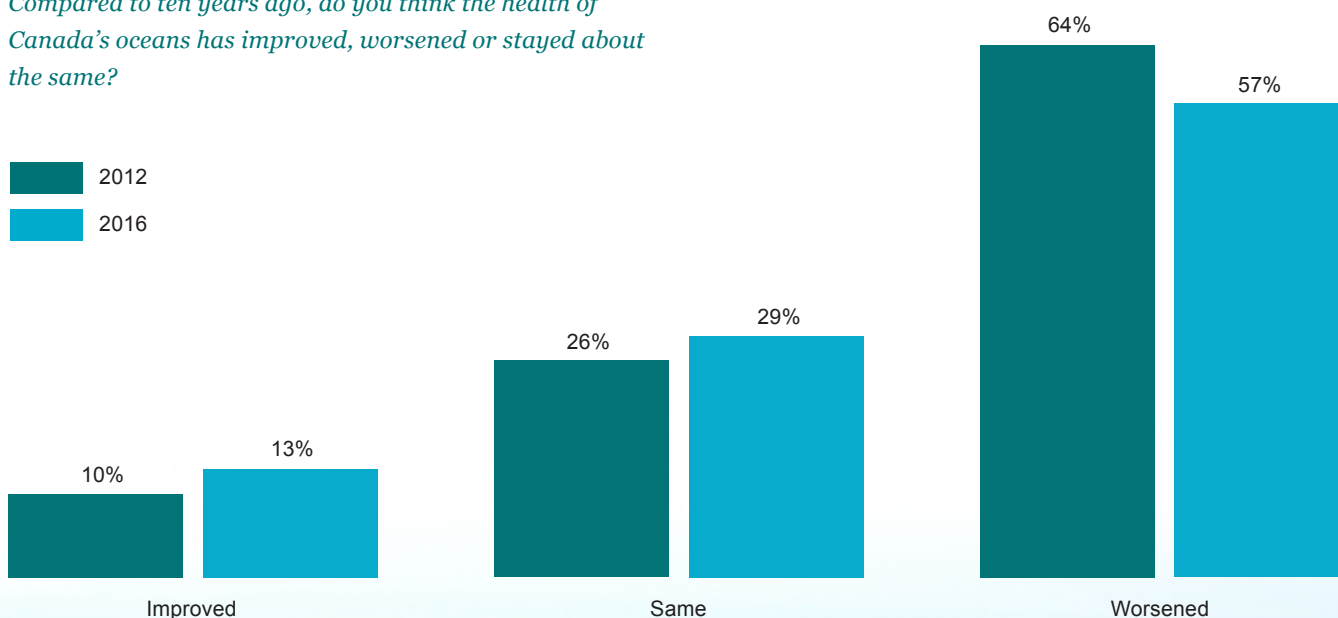
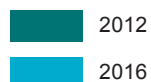


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HEALTH OF CANADA'S OCEANS COMPARED TO TEN YEARS AGO

A majority of Canadians continue to believe ocean health has deteriorated over the past decade.

Compared to ten years ago, do you think the health of Canada's oceans has improved, worsened or stayed about the same?



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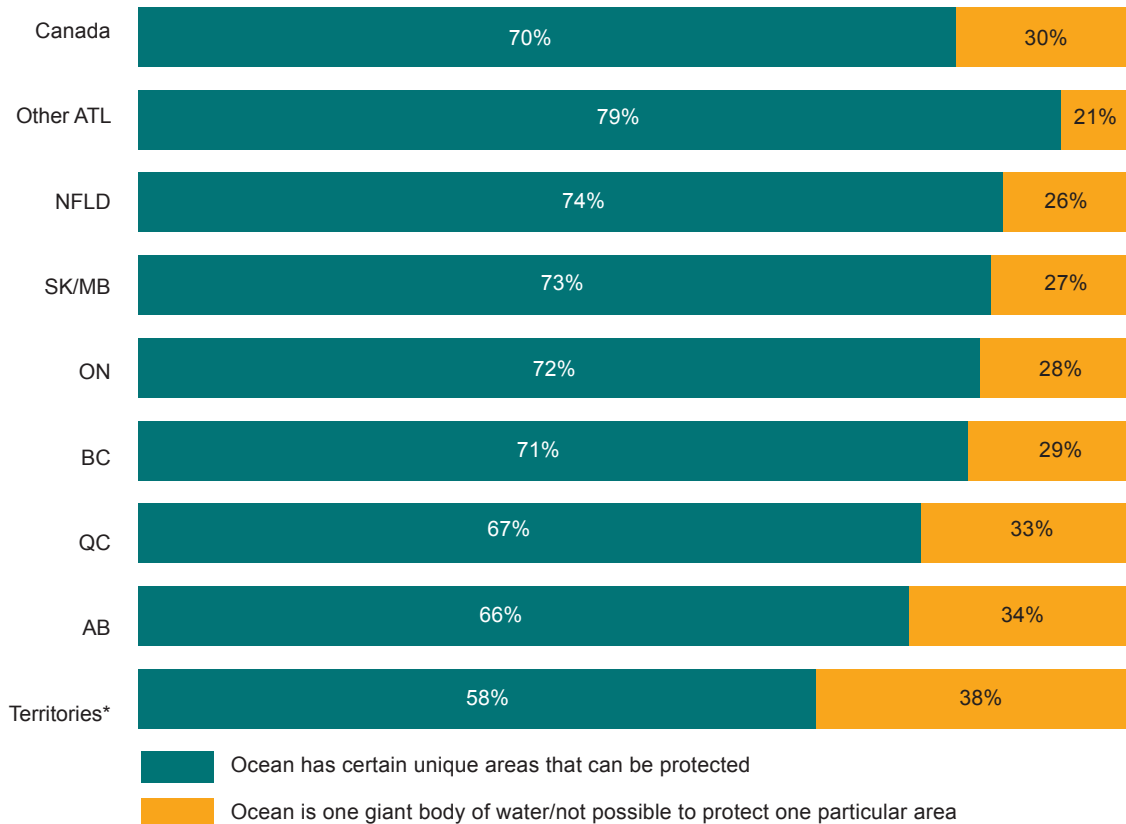




CAN OCEAN AREAS BE PROTECTED?

Seven in ten believe the ocean is not just one giant body of water and it is possible to protect unique areas from environmental damage.

In Canada, special natural areas like forests, grasslands and wetlands are designated as national parks, in order to protect and conserve them. Which of the following statements comes closest to your own view? The ocean, like the land, has certain areas that are unique and can be protected from environmental damage OR The ocean is one giant body of water and it's not possible to protect one particular area since what happens in one part of the ocean affects every other part.



* 4% don't know/no answer in the Territories

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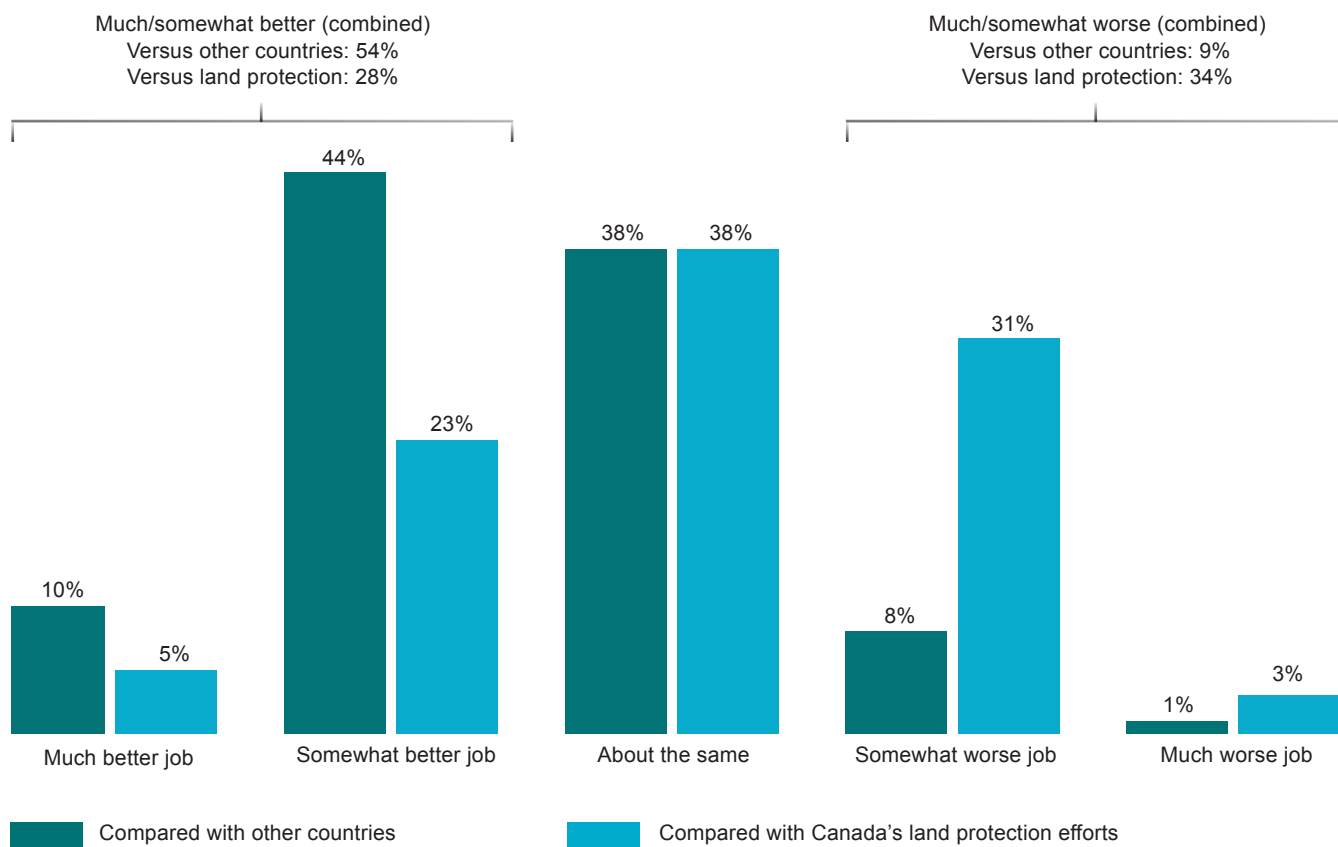


Canada's ocean protection efforts are compared more favourably to those of other countries than to our own land protection efforts.

CANADA'S OCEAN PROTECTION EFFORTS

Compared with other countries, how would you rate Canada's efforts as a whole in protecting its oceans?

Compared with Canada's efforts to protect natural areas on land, how would you rate Canada's efforts as a whole in protecting its oceans?



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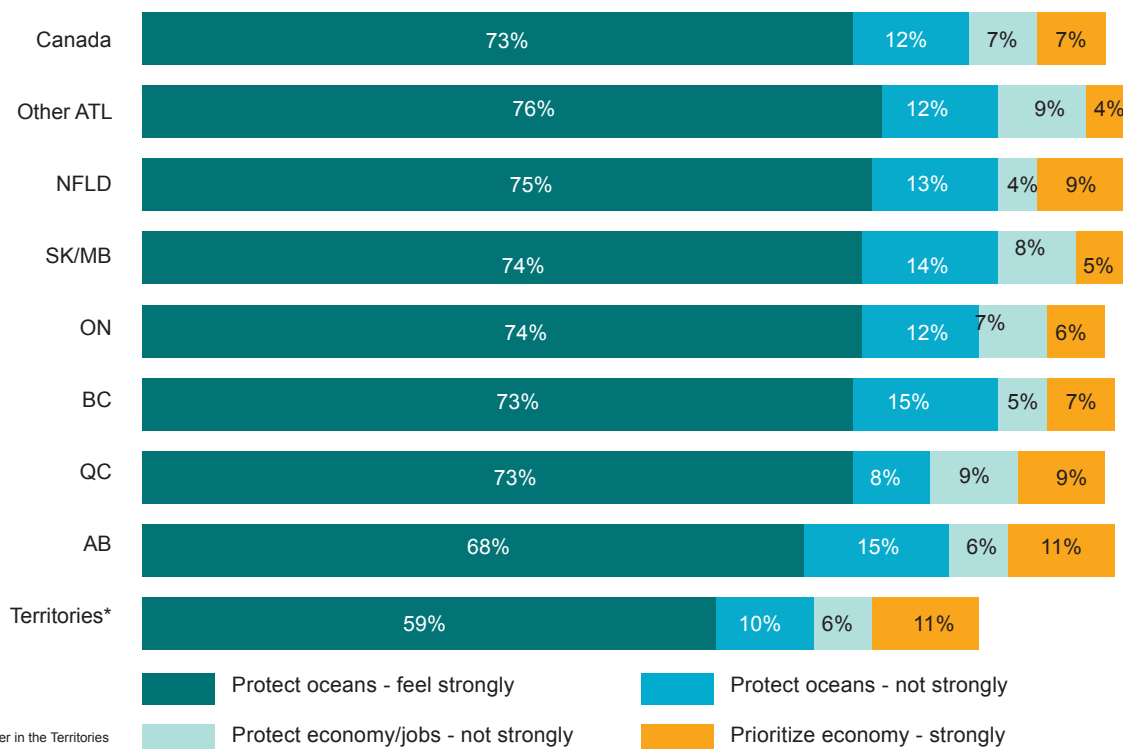
PRIORITIZING OCEAN PROTECTION OR THE ECONOMY



Almost three-quarters of Canadians feel strongly about prioritizing ocean protection in order to sustain the economy and jobs, rather than allowing industrial activities in all parts of our oceans.

Which of these two statements is closer to your own opinion? [Some/other] people say that we need to prioritize the economy and jobs over environmental protection, and allow industrial activities in every part of our oceans. Other/some] people say that we need to protect parts of our oceans so they can continue to sustain the economy and jobs in coastal communities.

Do you feel strongly or not so strongly that [INSERT Q7 RESPONSE: we need to prioritize the economy and jobs over environmental protection, and allow industrial activities in every part of our oceans / we need to protect parts of our oceans so they can continue to sustain the economy and jobs in coastal communities]?



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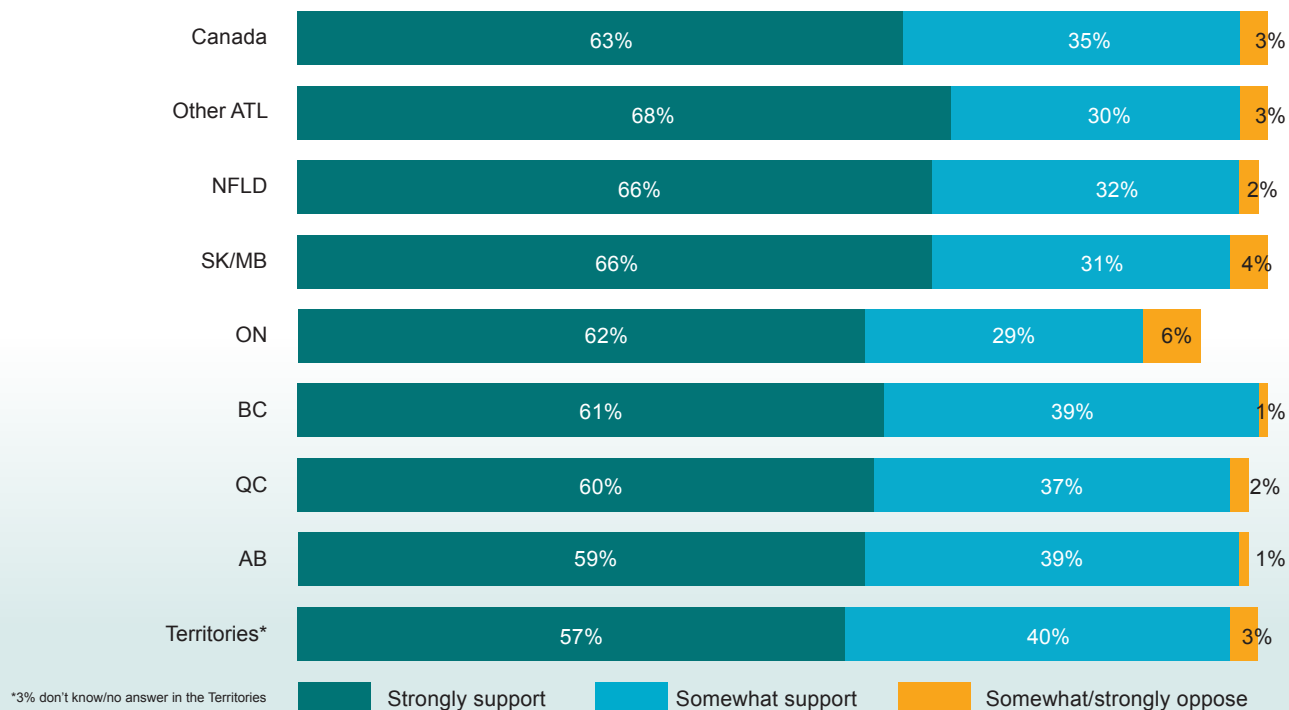


SUPPORT FOR MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

There is overwhelming support for marine protected areas in all regions of Canada.

© Paul Nicklen/National Geographic Stock / WWF Canada

A marine protected area (MPA) is an area of the ocean where human activities such as commercial fishing or oil and gas development are more strictly regulated than in surrounding waters. MPAs ensure that marine ecosystems remain healthy, by conserving and protecting fish and other marine species and their habitats. Do you support or oppose Canada having certain areas of the ocean within Canadian territorial waters as marine protected areas?



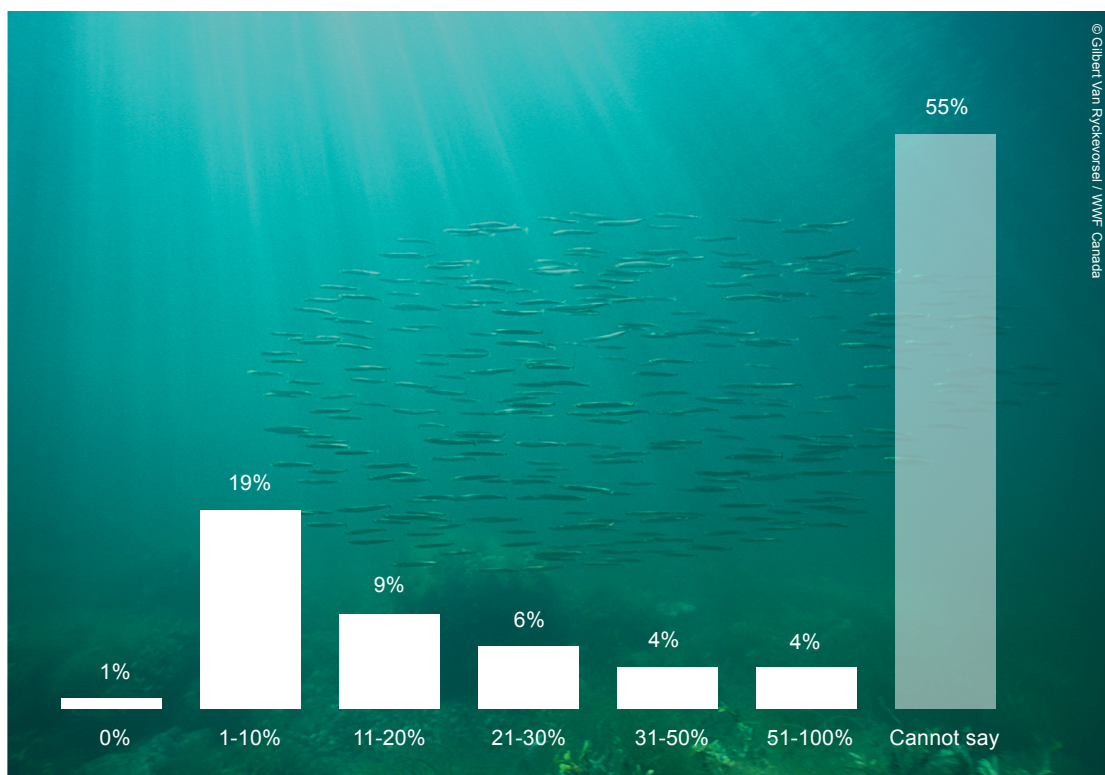
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HOW MUCH OF THE OCEAN IS DESIGNATED?

A majority of Canadians are unsure what percentage of Canada's oceans are currently designated as MPAs.

What percentage of Canada's oceans do you think are currently designated as marine protected areas?

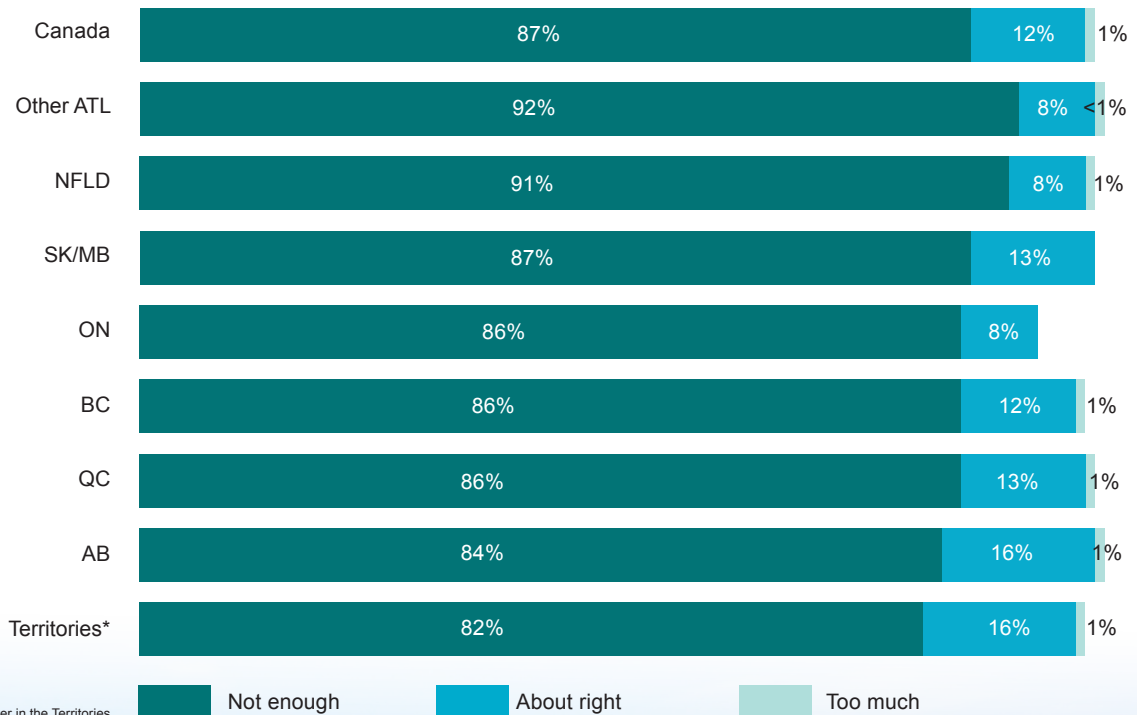


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IS 1% ENOUGH?

Most Canadians believes that it is not enough having only one percent of Canada’s oceans designated as MPAs.

Currently, around one percent of Canada’s oceans are designated as marine protected areas. Do you think that is too much, about right, or not enough?



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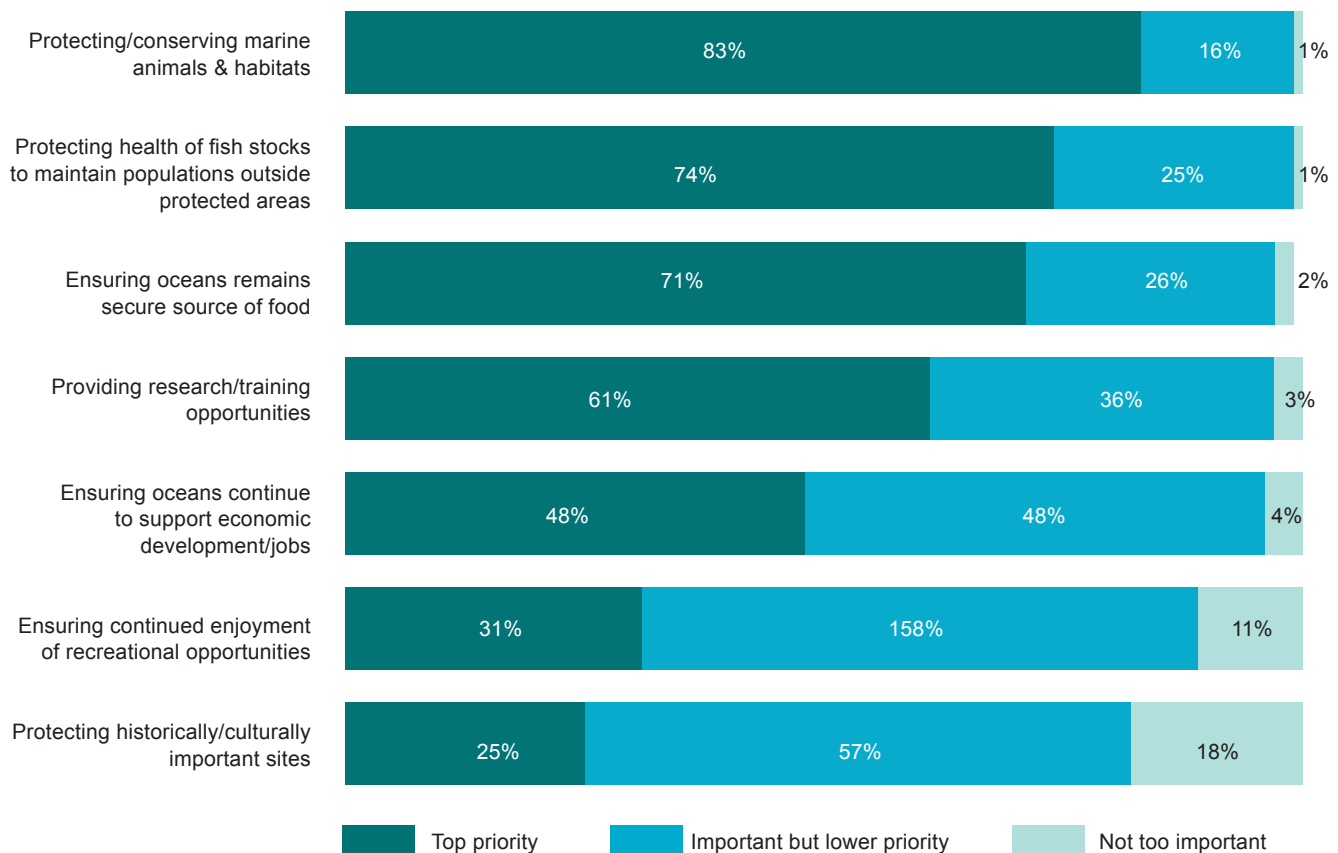




PRIORITIES FOR MPAs

Canadians prioritize marine animal/habitat protection in MPAs, followed by protecting fish stocks and ensuring oceans remain a secure food source.

The next question is about priorities for marine protected areas. Please indicate if each of the following should be a top priority, an important but lower priority, or is not too important for marine protected areas?



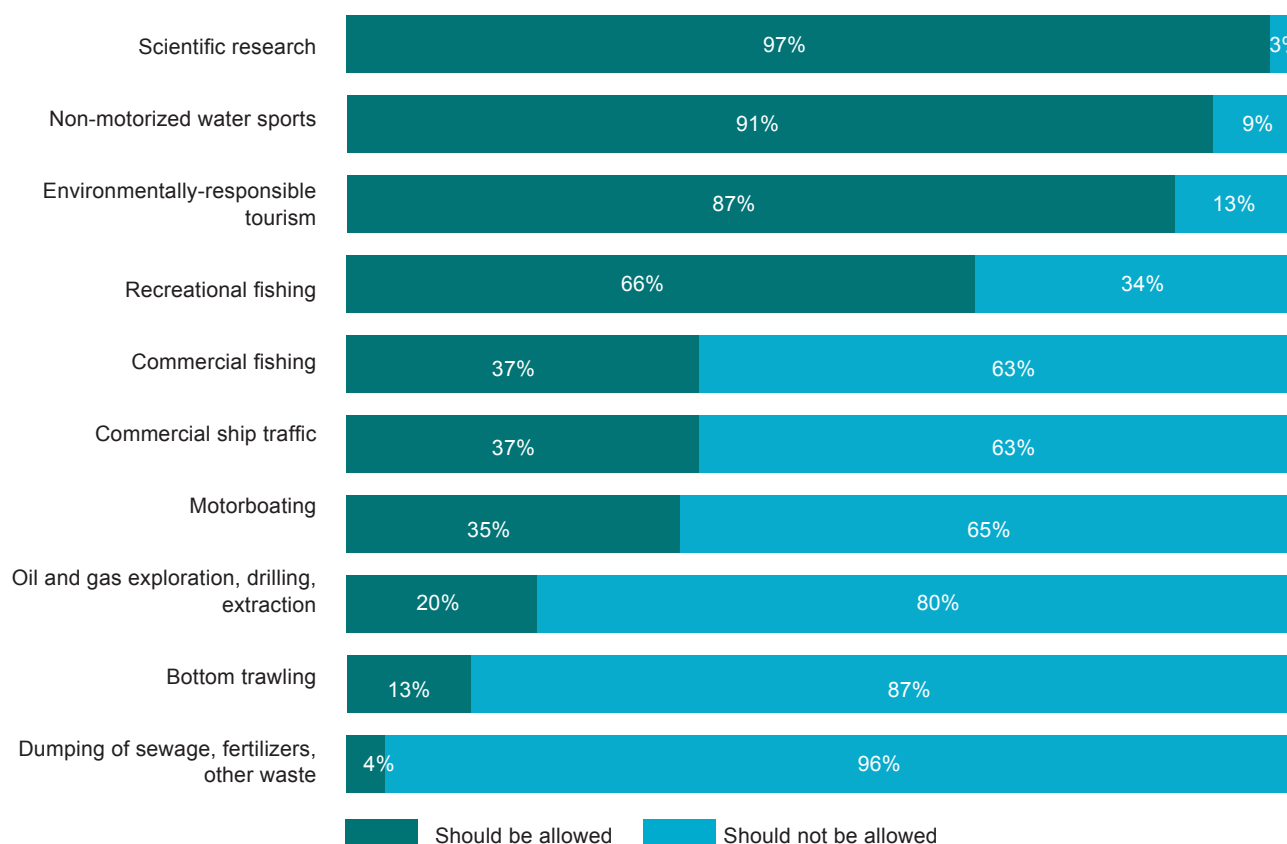
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ACCEPTABLE ACTIVITIES

Canadians clearly differentiate between acceptable and non-acceptable activities in MPAs, with research, non-motorized watersports and eco-tourism viewed as most acceptable.



Please indicate if you believe each of the following activities should be allowed or should not be allowed in a marine protected area



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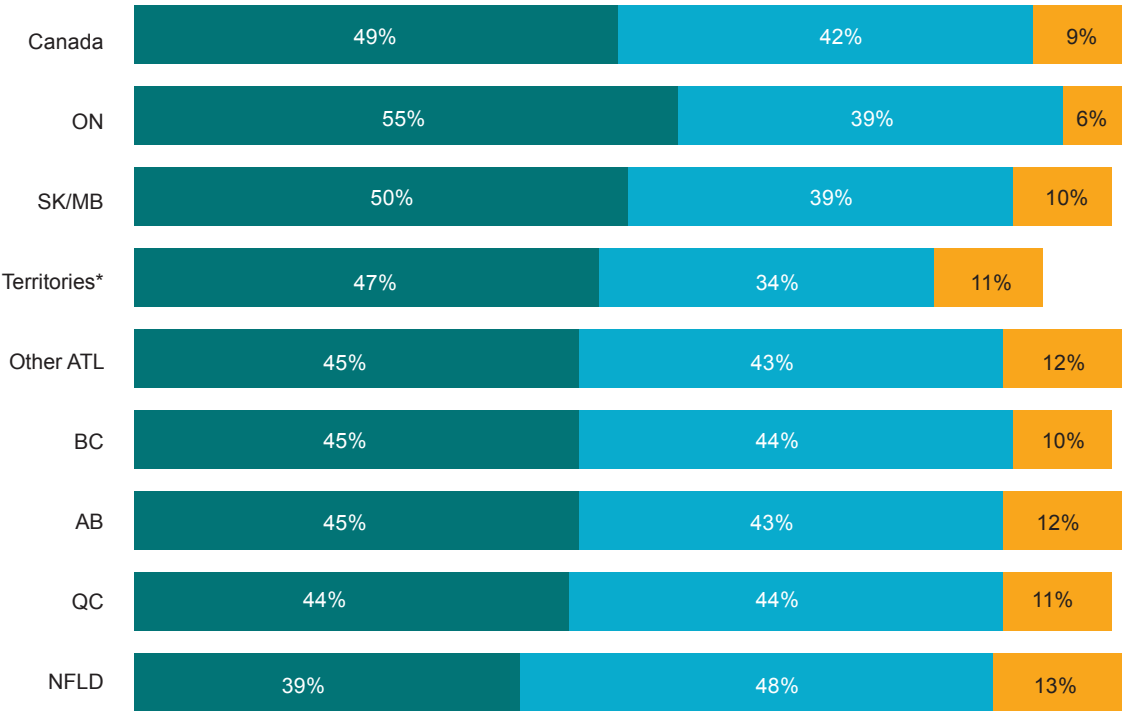




Most Canadians support minimum standards for MPAs, including half who strongly support them.

SUPPORT FOR MINIMUM STANDARDS

A marine protected area (MPA) is an area of the ocean where human activities such as commercial fishing or oil and gas development are more strictly regulated than in surrounding waters. MPAs ensure that marine ecosystems remain healthy, by conserving and protecting fish and other marine species and their habitats. Do you support or oppose Canada having certain areas of the ocean within Canadian territorial waters as marine protected areas?



* 4% don't know/no answer in the Territories

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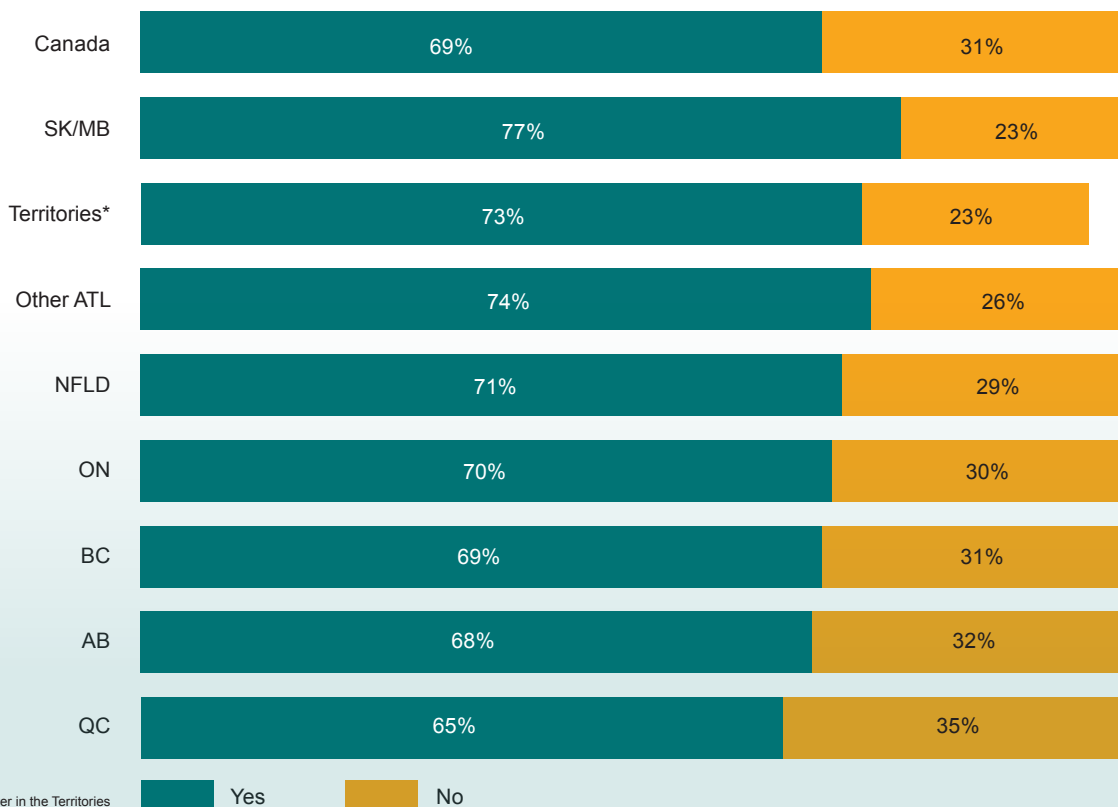
MPA REGULATIONS AND TAX INCREASES

Among supporters of minimum standards (91% of total sample)

Supporters of minimum standards for MPAs generally remain in favour even if it means tax increases to replace lost government revenue from oil and gas development.



A ban on oil and gas extraction in marine protected areas could lead to an increase in taxes to replace lost government revenue. Does this make you any less likely to support marine protected areas?



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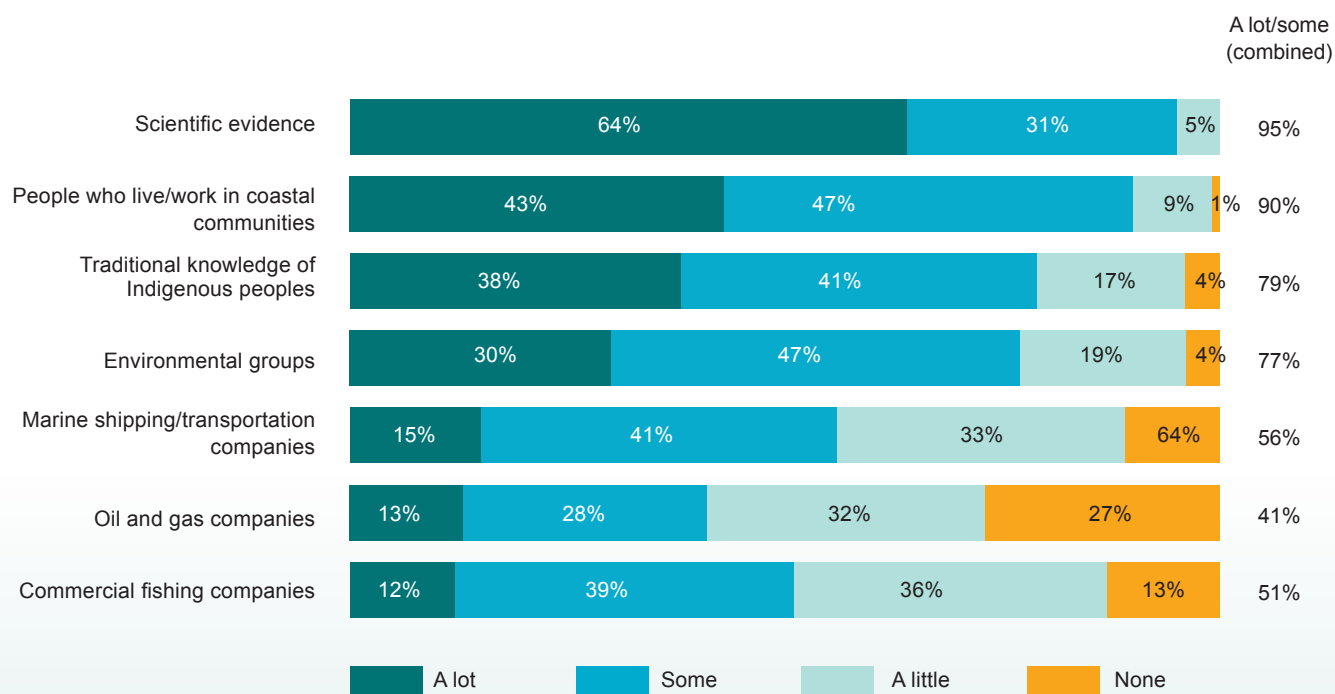




Canadians believe at least some importance should be placed on most information sources about MPAs, with greatest emphasis on scientific evidence.

INFORMATION SOURCES FOR MPAs

How much importance should be placed on each of the following sources of information and perspectives when the federal government is making decisions about marine protected areas?



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METHODOLOGY

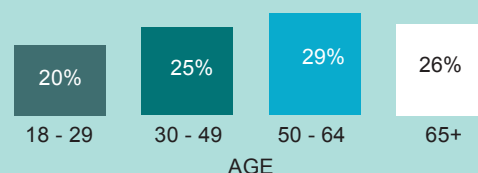
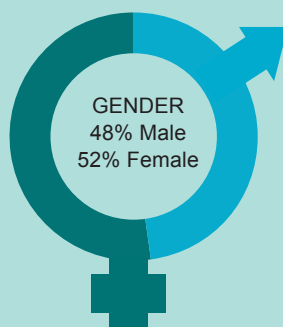
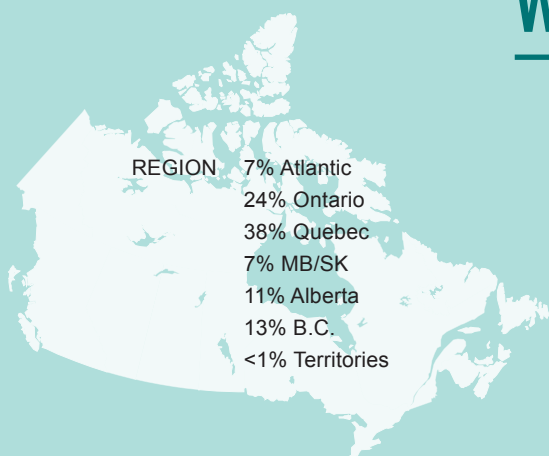
This report presents the findings of a survey conducted with a sample of 1,655 Canadians (aged 18 and over) from September 27 to October 7, 2016. A mixed-mode approach was used, with 1,502 interviews conducted from an online panel in the provinces, and 153 interviews conducted by telephone in the Territories. Quotas were set by region, age, gender, household income (in the provinces) and Indigenous identity (in the territories) to ensure the sample is representative of the Canadian population, according to the most recent National Household Survey data.

Because an online survey is not a probability sample, a margin of sampling error cannot be reported.

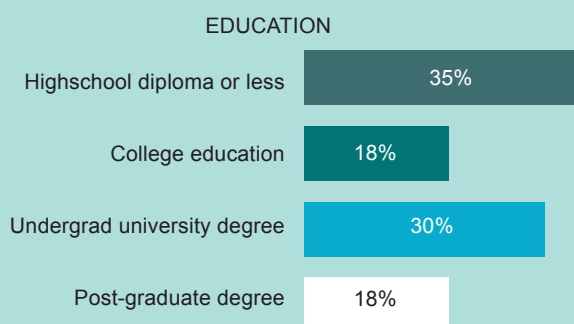
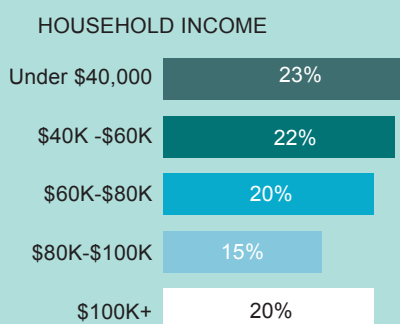
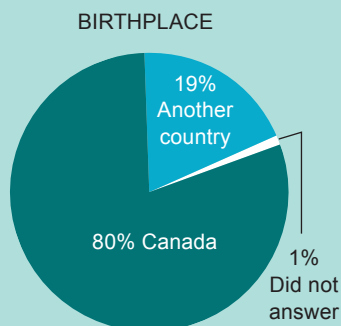
In this report, results are expressed as percentages unless otherwise noted. Results may not add to 100% due to rounding or multiple responses.



WEIGHTED PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS



CHILD <18 AT HOME: **18%**



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We are creating solutions to the most serious conservation challenges facing our planet, helping people and nature thrive.

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