
2021 BC Watershed Security Survey

TOPLINE REPORT



Sept 24, 2021



POLIS Project on Ecological Governance
watersustainabilityproject



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Research Methodology

Survey results are based on an online survey of **1,012** English-speaking B.C. residents aged 18 years or older, **fielded September 17th to September 20th, 2020**, inclusive. The online survey platform was programmed for both mobile and desktop response.

Respondents for this survey were recruited using a professional online panel sample, and accurately replicate a cross-section of the B.C. population. Weighting is applied to the data according to Statistics Canada figures on economic region, age, and gender. Online panels however are not strictly a probability sample, and therefore Bayesian inference is used to estimate a credibility interval, an analogue of margin of error. The [credibility interval for a total sample of n=1,012](#) is $\pm 3.1\%$ at a 95% confidence level.

*NOTE: All numbers in the tables that follow are percentages, unless otherwise stated. The notation * in the following report indicates a percentage greater than zero but less than 0.05.*

Core Questionnaire

Q1. In your opinion, what are British Columbia's greatest strengths, compared to other regions of Canada and the world?

[UNAIDED] (39% Unsure)

	%
Nature / Natural Beauty / Environmental Protection	28
Natural Resources	19
Diversity	11
People / Community / Solidarity	10
Climate	8
Economy	4
Tourism	3
Covid Response / Health Care	3
Freedom	3
Coast / Ocean / Water	2
Negative association/response	2
Lumber / Forestry / Forests	2
Government	2
Trade	2
Other	3

Q2. Thinking of the various problems affecting life in BC, what is most UPSETTING to you these days?

[UNAIDED] (28% Unsure)

	%
Cost Of Living / Inflation / Poverty	13
Covid Deniers / Anti Vaxers / Unvaccinated People	13
Affordable Housing	11
Covid	10
Covid Restrictions / Vaccine Passport / Loss Of Freedom	8
Climate Change / Wildfires	7
Government / Corruption	6
Homelessness / Drug Addiction	6
Racism / Bigotry / Social Division	4
Old Growth / Pipelines / Environmental Damage	4
Crime	4
Health Care	3
Tolerance / Immigration	3
Regulations / Restrictions / Taxes	3
Too Much Indigenous Focus	1
Covid Handling	1
Economy	1
Urban Focus	1
Other	4

Q3. What do you expect will be British Columbia's most precious natural resource in the future, say 10 years from now?

[UNAIDED] (36% Unsure)

	%
Water	32
Forestry / Lumber / Logging / Timber	25
Oil / Gas	8
Hydro / Clean Energy / Renewable Energy	6
People	5
Minerals	4
Nature / Environment / Natural Beauty	3
Trees / Forest / Old Growth	3
Wildlife / Fish / Salmon	3
Tourism	3
Coal	2
Energy	2
Ocean	1
Economy	1
Other	3.5

Q4. Thinking about the B.C. region in which you live, how CONCERNED are you about the following environmental issues?

%	TOTAL CONCERNED	Extremely concerned	Quite concerned	Somewhat concerned	Not very concerned	Not concerned
Pollution of lakes, rivers, & streams	62	34	28	26	8	4
Climate change	59	39	20	22	9	9
Declining salmon stocks	59	32	27	28	9	5
Damage to marine ecosystems	59	32	27	26	10	6
Loss of wildlife habitat	58	33	25	26	9	7
Toxic chemicals	56	31	25	27	10	7
Contamination of drinking water	55	32	23	23	16	5
Extinction of plant & animal species	55	31	24	26	12	7
Deforestation	55	29	26	25	13	7
Air pollution	54	30	24	26	13	7
Natural resource depletion	54	27	27	27	12	8
Waste disposal	54	26	28	29	12	6
Fresh water scarcity	53	29	24	24	15	7
Overdevelopment & sprawl	53	27	26	26	15	5
Carbon emissions	53	26	27	26	11	10
Loss of farmland	51	24	27	30	14	5
Sewage treatment	47	23	24	28	18	7
Oil & gas development	44	22	22	27	18	12

Q5. Which of the following statements is closest to your view? *The BC government should...*

	%
Create more <u>jobs in resource industries</u> like fracking, salmon farming & old growth logging.	15
Maintain existing <u>jobs in resource industries</u> like fracking, salmon farming & old growth logging.	18
Support a gradual transition from old to new economy <u>jobs</u> like renewable resource development, sustainable agriculture, and natural habitat restoration.	21
Support a rapid transition from old to new economy <u>jobs</u> like renewable resource development, sustainable agriculture, and natural habitat restoration.	46

Q6. How would you rate the OVERALL HEALTH of freshwater lakes, rivers and streams in and around your community today?

%	TOP2	Excellent	Good	OK	Poor	Terrible	BOT2	No idea
2013	44	5	39	43	10	2	11	2
2018	42	8	34	38	13	2	15	5
2021	35	9	26	39	14	5	19	7

Q7. Please say how much you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following descriptions of fresh water sources, or watersheds, in your region of BC?

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Crucial to human health & survival	76	18	6
A life support system for nature	75	23	2
Drinking water	69	26	5
Our most precious natural resource	66	28	6
A public resource	65	31	4
Major economic asset	61	33	7
Key asset for surviving the effects of climate change	58	33	8
Clean	55	36	9
A renewable resource	54	37	9
Threatened	53	35	12
Abundant	42	44	14
Well-managed	32	52	15

Q8. In your opinion, what % of all BC watersheds should be off-limit to resource development? *Enter a number between 0% & 100%*

	% of BC watersheds off-limit
Mean:	69%
Median:	75%

Q9. When you think of THREATS to the health of our fresh water systems in British Columbia, what concerns you most?

[UNAIDED] (40% Unsure)

	%
Contamination / Pollution	39
Oil / Gas / Mining / Fracking	8
Climate Change / Drought / Water Scarcity	8
Chemical / Waste Dumping	7
People	5
Population Growth / Overuse / Overdevelopment	5
Logging / Forestry / Deforestation	4
Threats To Wildlife / Fish	4
Corporate Interests	2
Encroachment / Foreign Interests	2
Management / Preservation / Conservation	2
Drinking / Quality / Clean Water	2
Infrastructure / Development / Dams	2
Government / Polititians / Corruption	1
Agriculture / Irrigation / Pesticides	1
Other	8

Q10. How concerned are you about the following issues related to BC's watersheds?

	Top 2 Concern	Extremely concerned	Quite concerned	Somewhat concerned	Not very concerned	Not concerned
Increased severity of wildfires	70	44	26	19	8	4
Lack of accountability for polluters	69	44	25	22	6	3
Industrial pollution	65	37	28	26	5	4
Damage to salmon spawning streams	64	37	27	25	8	3
Damage to wildlife habitat	61	34	27	27	8	3
Untreated municipal sewage & runoff	61	35	26	27	8	4
Increased water scarcity	60	29	31	25	9	6
Clearcutting	59	30	29	26	10	5
Bulk extraction by commercial water bottlers	59	39	20	26	9	5
Industrial water users not leaving enough water for salmon	58	30	28	32	7	2
Water waste by residential consumers	56	28	28	32	8	3
Toxic algae blooms	54	27	27	31	10	5
Overuse by fracking & mining operations	54	34	20	23	17	6
Agricultural pollution	53	25	28	32	10	5
Large-scale hydroelectric dams	43	18	25	30	19	9
Environmental groups opposing resource development	42	20	22	31	19	7
Indigenous people standing in the way of resource projects	39	21	18	26	20	14

Q11. To the best of your knowledge, are current rules governing water use in your community ENOUGH or NOT ENOUGH to ensure the future sustainability of freshwater resources?

	2010 %	2021 %
Enough	62	56
Not enough	26	39
Don't know	12	5

Q12. How concerned are you about the potential for a major water crisis in your community in the next few years?

	May 2021 %	Sept 2021%
Not at all concerned, we have plenty of water	12	12
Not very concerned	28	23
Somewhat concerned	41	37
Very concerned	17	24
Already a crisis in my community	2	5
TOTAL CONCERNED	60%	66%

Q13. [ASK IF AT LEAST SOMEWHAT CONCERNED IN Q13] What is the nature of your water concerns?

[UNAIDED] (42% Unsure)

	%
Water Scarcity	20
Pollution	20
Climate Change / Drought	14
Population Growth / Overuse / Overdevelopment	9
Drinking / Quality / Clean Water	9
Chemical / Waste Contamination	6
Abundance / Secure Access	3
Management / Security / Conservation	3
Concerned / No Reason	3
Natural Disaster	2
Corporate Interests / Exports	2
Nature / Environmental Protection	2
No Accountability	2
Oil / Gas / Mining	1
Wildfires	1
Other	7

Q14. Which of the following statements is closer to your own point of view?

	%
B.C. needs to make major investments in watershed security to protect fresh water in this province.	78
B.C. has plenty of clean fresh water: more taxes, red tape, and government spending on clean water are unnecessary.	18
Other / Unsure	3

Q15. Thinking of watershed security in your region of the province, how much of a priority is the following?

	Top 2	Top priority	High priority	Moderate priority	Low priority	Not a priority	Unsure
Ensuring a clean, safe & secure supply of drinking water	72	42	30	17	6	2	4
Making industry pay for any pollution or damage they cause	69	44	25	20	5	2	4
Cleaning up contamination & waste from mining & fracking operations.	63	34	29	22	7	3	6
Cleaning up damage in streams and rivers from logging operations	61	28	33	22	6	5	5
Doing what it takes to ensure the survival of nature, wildlife, and salmon.	61	31	30	24	5	3	7
Helping rebuild wild salmon populations	60	26	34	29	5	4	4
Making local communities safer & more resilient from floods, fires & droughts	60	26	34	25	6	3	5
Adapting to global warming	60	31	29	21	10	6	3
Improving the efficiency of water use by agricultural producers	57	20	37	27	7	4	5
Buying back rights to old-growth forests to serve as natural water reservoirs.	53	26	27	26	8	6	6
Putting local people to work monitoring, managing, and restoring their watersheds	53	19	34	29	7	5	6
Giving Indigenous & non-indigenous communities more authority over their watersheds	41	18	23	29	13	11	7

Q16. There are various ways in which BC could update its approach to protecting and managing fresh water. What do you think about the following...?

	Total SUPPORT	Strongly support	Somewh at support	Somewh at oppose	Strongly oppose	Total oppose	Unsure
Jail and fine corporate polluters	82	51	31	10	3	13	6
Rebuild wetlands	79	36	43	9	3	12	9
Make sources of drinking water completely off-limits to development	78	46	32	10	3	13	9
Make industry pay more to secure and restore BC watersheds	77	45	32	10	4	14	9
Appoint a Provincial Watershed Security Officer to enforce laws protecting BC's fresh water	76	35	41	11	4	15	9
Hire more frontline staff in all regions of the province to enforce freshwater protection	76	33	43	12	4	16	8
Prioritize the needs of fish, wildlife, and nature over industry	75	39	36	11	4	15	10
Give local communities the right to say "NO" to unwanted development in their watersheds	74	39	35	12	4	16	10
Eliminate clear cut logging	66	34	32	17	6	23	11
Recognize the rights of Indigenous communities to manage watersheds within their traditional territories.	64	30	34	15	11	26	10

Q17. Which of the following statements about BC's direction is closer to your own point of view?





Indicate your preference by selecting "A" or "B".

STATEMENT A	A %	Not Sure %	B %	STATEMENT B
The recent BC summer was one of the hottest, driest, and worst fire seasons in living memory.	75	9	16	The recent BC summer was hot and dry, but not really much different from past years.
Water is life, BC needs to do what it takes to secure & restore our fresh water sources.	61	21	18	Our fresh water is fine, we do not need to increase the tax burden on industry during COVID.
Industry should be made to pay MUCH higher rental fees for the fresh water they use in our province.	56	25	19	Increasing water rental fees for industry will discourage investment & harm the BC economy.

STATEMENT A	A %	Not Sure %	B %	STATEMENT B
Local people should have the right to say "no" to industrial activities in their local watersheds.	60	27	13	The BC Govt should have final say over industrial use of local watersheds—not local communities.
We need to do what it takes to secure BC's watersheds, even if it means limiting development.	57	29	14	Protecting resource jobs for working families matters more than limiting development in watersheds.
Indigenous nations should have a RIGHT TO SAY 'NO' to resource projects in traditional territories.	45	30	25	Indigenous nations SHOULD NOT be allowed to stop resource projects in their traditional territories.

Q18. Below is a list of publicly-funded projects and initiatives that have recently been proposed or completed in British Columbia.

Please say whether you think each project is a GOOD IDEA or a BAD IDEA.

		Good idea	Bad idea	Unsure
	B.C. Watershed Security Fund (\$1 billion)	65	11	24
	Victoria Sewage Treatment Plant (\$775 million)	64	8	28
	Pattullo Bridge (\$1.4 billion)	53	13	33
	Massey Tunnel Replacement (\$4.15 billion)	48	20	31
	Broadway Subway Line (\$2.83 billion)	45	21	34
	Site C Dam (\$16 billion)	39	27	34

Q19. Some people have proposed that B.C. use water rental fees collected from industry to establish a billion-dollar Watershed Security Fund. This independent fund would be spent on projects to restore, protect, & secure freshwater sources in communities in all regions of B.C.

Please say whether you would support or oppose dedicating ALL INDUSTRY WATER RENTAL FEES collected in B.C. to a billion dollar B.C. Watershed Security Fund.

	%
Support	75
Oppose	17
Other / Unsure	8

Q20. Why do you say [support]?

[UNAIDED] (49% Unsure)

	%
Important / Needed / Reasonable	28
Industry Must Pay	20
Restoration / Environmental Protection	14
Clean / Secure Water / Life	8
Accountability	4
Good Management	4
Sustainable	4
User Pay	3
Availability / Government Funds	2
People Should Not Pay / Taxes	2
Positive Change / Incentive / Innovation	1
Future Generations	1
Fees Are Too Low	1
Limit Industry Usage	1
Action Needed	1
Other	7

Q21. How much CONFIDENCE do you have in the following when it comes to DECISIONS affecting fresh water in your community?

	Top 2	A lot	A fair amount	Some	Little	None
Scientists & experts	67	29	38	24	6	4
A local watershed authority	47	14	33	37	12	4
Conservation or environmental groups	46	19	27	33	12	9
BC's Chief Watershed Security Officer	46	14	32	38	10	6
Local First Nations	41	15	26	32	17	11
Local people	41	11	30	40	14	4
Farmers & ranchers	39	12	27	40	16	5
Your municipal or regional government	37	10	27	38	16	8
The BC provincial government	36	12	24	39	14	10
BC Hydro	35	9	26	37	20	8
The federal government	28	9	19	36	21	15
Recreational watershed users	28	8	20	36	26	10
Community leaders	28	7	21	44	20	8
Local business leaders	22	7	15	37	29	12
Large industrial watershed users	21	8	13	25	29	25
Land developers	20	5	15	27	31	23
Non-resident landowners	16	6	10	22	28	35



APPENDIX

Demographics

D1. To validate your survey, please provide your postal code.



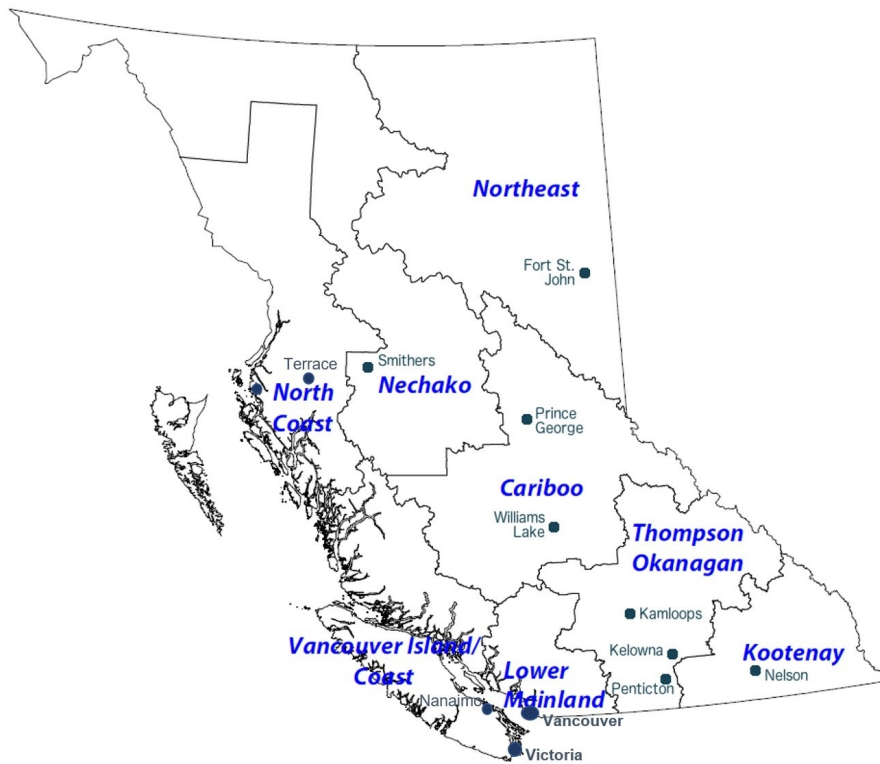
D2. Is your gender male or female, or do you identify your gender in other terms?

	%
	49
	51
Other terms	*

**Denotes a value greater than 0 but less than 0.05%*

D3. And what is your age

	%
18-34	28
35-49	24
50-64	26
65+	23

**D4. In which region of BC do you currently live?**

	%
Lower Mainland / Metro Vancouver	60.6
Vancouver Island / Coast	17.7
Thompson / Okanagan	11.7
Kootenay	3.8
Cariboo	3.5
Skeena / North Coast	1
Nechako	0.6
Peace / Northeast	1.2

D5. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

	%
Some high school or less	4
High school graduate	20
Some college or university	15
College certificate/diploma - Trades	13
College certificate/diploma - Non-trades	14
University degree (e.g. BSc, BA)	24
Professional designation (e.g. LLB, PEng, CA)	4
Graduate degree (e.g. MA, PhD)	8

D6. Are you a homeowner, or do you currently rent?*Select all that apply*

	%
Homeowner - with a mortgage	35
Homeowner - with no mortgage	31
Rent home	30
Live in parent or relatives' home	6
Other	1

D7. How many years have you lived in your current community?

	%
Less than 1 year	5
1-5 years	23
6-10 years	18
11-20 years	21
More than 20 years	33

D8. Do you belong to a union?*Select all that apply.*

	%
No	69
Yes, I currently belong to a union	19
I am a past union member	14
Others in household are current or past members	3

D9. Which phrase below comes closest to describing your current financial situation...?

	%
Falling behind on monthly expenses	37
Just getting by, with no savings	32
Getting ahead, with some savings	20
Financially secure	11

D10. In the past 12 months, have you taken part in any of the following activities...?*Select all that apply.*

	%
Watched the TV news	77
Read a newspaper	65
Watched an online video or talk about an issue that concerns you	44
Signed an online petition	36
Donated financially to a cause, or political party you care about	28
Commented on news stories online	24
Purchased or boycotted goods or services based on ethical considerations	24
Called, wrote or spoke to a politician about an issue	15
None of these	6

D11. Please say whether you think of yourself as...

	Yes	Somewhat	No	Unsure
Canadian	82	13	4	1
British Columbian	78	16	4	2
Albertan	6	10	81	3
Indigenous	9	9	80	2
A nature-lover	58	33	7	2
Working-class	52	27	17	3
A gardener	29	34	35	2
Someone who likes to cook	45	35	19	2
A conservationist	26	40	25	8
A settler	15	21	53	10
A hunter	10	10	78	2
An angler	13	16	63	8
Optimistic about the future	29	44	21	5

P1. Some people choose to vote in elections, others choose not to. How likely are you to vote in...?

%	Definitely voting	Probably voting	Not likely to vote	Not voting	Not sure
The next BC <u>provincial election</u> in 2024	68	19	5	4	3

P2. If there was an election held today, which one of the following BC PROVINCIAL parties would most likely be your FIRST CHOICE in your local riding?

	ALL VOTERS %	DECIDED VOTERS %	DECIDED & LIKELY %
BC NDP, led by John Horgan	37	48	49
BC Liberals, led by interim leader Shirley Bond	26	34	34
BC Greens, led by Sonia Furstenau	10	13	12
BC Conservatives / Other	4	5	5
Undecided [SKIP to P8]	16		
Refuse to say [SKIP to P10]	3		
Not voting [SKIP to P10]	4		

P3. [ASK IF UNDECIDED] Are you totally undecided, or are you leaning towards one of the PROVINCIAL parties below?

	%
BC NDP, led by John Horgan	1
BC Liberals, led by interim leader Shirley Bond	2
BC Greens, led by Sonia Furstenau	4
Other party (specify)	*
<i>Totally undecided</i>	12

P4. And which one of the following PROVINCIAL parties would be your 2nd choice?

	By 1st choice party preference			
	BC NDP	BC LIBS	BC GREENS	OTHER
BC NDP, led by John Horgan		22	43	1
BC Liberals, led by interim leader Shirley Bond	23		23	16
BC Greens, led by Sonia Furstenau	27	23		*
Other party	1	4	1	
Undecided	19	13	13	9
No 2nd Choice	31	39	20	73

P5. Thinking back to the PREVIOUS BC ELECTION, held this past fall in October 2020, which party did you vote for then? BASE: PREVIOUS VOTERS WHO REMEMBERED.

	%
BC NDP, led by John Horgan	46
BC Liberals, led by Andrew Wilkinson	36
BC Greens, led by Sonia Furstenau	13
Another party	5