



# BIODIVERSITY SURVEY FINDINGS

FINAL REPORT  
SEPTEMBER 2024

**ENVIRONICS**  
RESEARCH

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# **EcoAnalytics and its membership seek insight into Canadians' views on biodiversity and nature loss**

This research sheds light on the general public's:

- (1) perceptions and understanding of the topic,
- (2) knowledge of causes and impacts of nature loss,
- (3) thoughts on solutions for protecting biodiversity.

# RESEARCH METHODS

To gather information about what Canadians know and think about biodiversity, Environics Research conducted an online survey with N=1,517 adults across Canada.

The survey was fielded from July 15-23, 2024. The sample was drawn from an online panel, including an oversample in the Atlantic provinces. As online panels are opt-in, this is a non-probability sample, and a margin of sampling error does not apply. Final data were weighted to be representative of the population by age, gender and region.

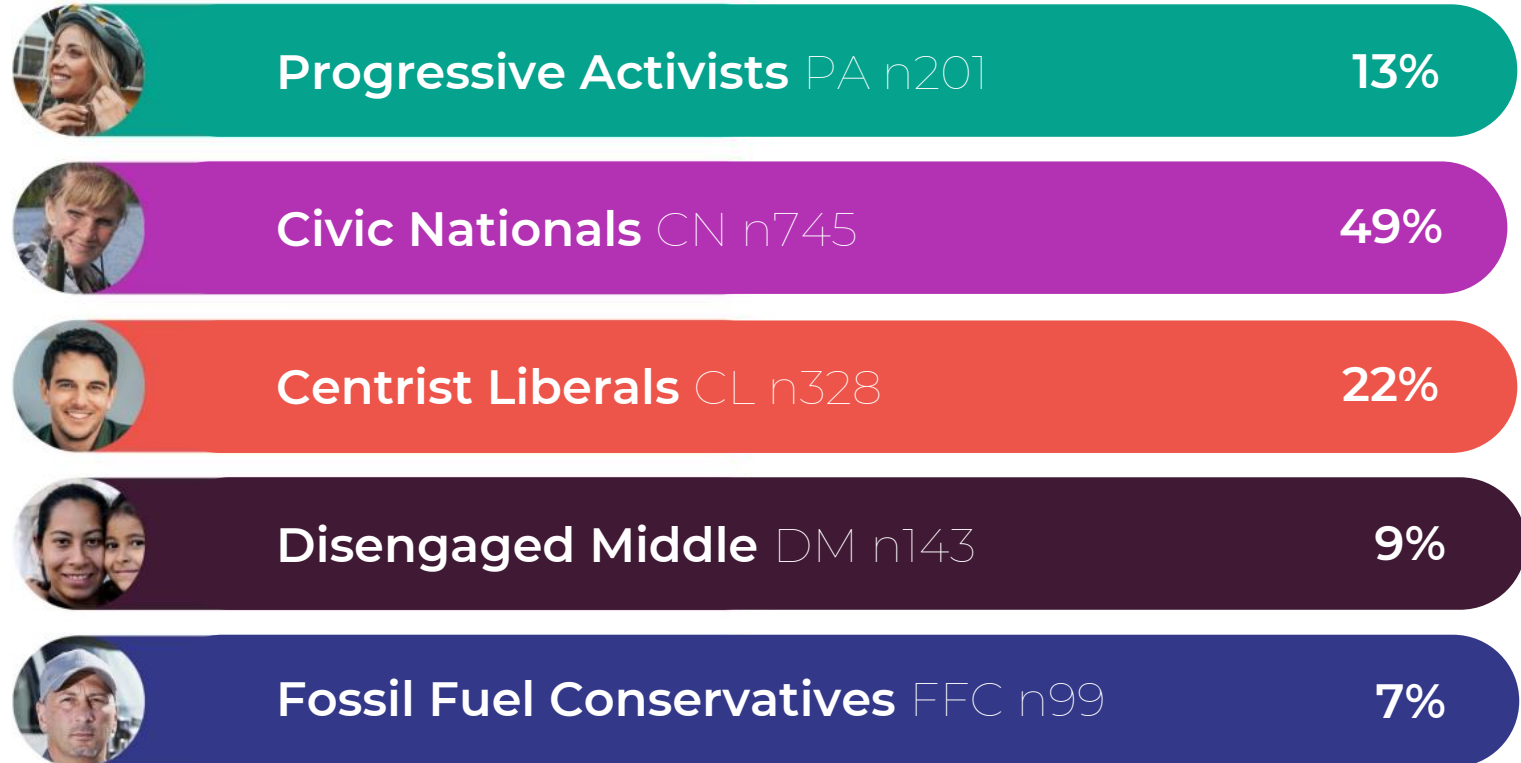
Region	Unweighted Total	Weighted Total
British Columbia	224	205
Alberta	177	175
Saskatchewan	51	47
Manitoba	74	55
Ontario	370	586
Quebec	256	350
New Brunswick	170	32
Nova Scotia	152	40
Prince Edward Island / Newfoundland & Labrador	43	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,517</b>	<b>1,517</b>

*Note: Percentages less than 3% may not show up on all graphs in this report. Online surveys conducted with large, trusted panel providers help reduce social desirability bias which is important for topics like the environment, and enables more complex questions, message testing, and deeper analysis by linking to social values in a more cost-effective way than phone surveys.*

# RESEARCH METHODS

The CA-MAP Segments developed by Dr. Erick Lachapelle and Dr. Marjolaine Martel-Morin were used to analyze the results. Segments are shown from highest to lowest climate engagement.

The percentages represent the proportion of each segment among the survey respondents.



# PRIORITY TAKE-AWAYS

- 1 Most Canadians have heard of terms like biodiversity and nature loss, but lack in-depth knowledge.**

This makes it difficult for them to discern the biggest causes of nature loss, the most important solutions and which stakeholders hold the greatest responsibility for change.
- 2 Canadians hold generally positive perceptions of the health of nature in Canada, and thus lack understanding of the urgent need for protection.**

Personal experience with nature loss is associated with a greater sense of urgency for individuals (if not necessarily a sense of “crisis”).
- 3 There is some recognition of the emotional and health benefits of nature, but room for this connection to be boosted among the general public.**

Canadians acknowledge the value of nature as our “life support”, but not everyone understands the personal impacts of nature loss (relative to societal impacts).
- 4 Messages about nature and its universal benefits are seen as very encouraging reasons to support nature protection among a broad audience.**

Emphasizing the broader benefits of nature, such as supporting life on Earth, resonates more with Canadians than species-specific messaging. This needs to be balanced with the needs of eNGOs’ supporters, who may expect info about specific species protection.
- 5 The survey results, and the reactions of the segments, suggest some risk of polarized views about nature, especially when linked to climate action.**

More environmentally-engaged segments tend to appreciate the value of nature in limiting climate change; less engaged individuals may resist acknowledging this link, or even put off by connecting nature with the polarized issue of climate change.

# BIODIVERSITY **PERCEPTIONS & UNDERSTANDING**

# Perceptions | **Top of mind associations with nature**

The top associations with nature are Images of forests, bodies of water, and wildlife. Some cite emotional connections to nature, such as feelings of peace and, well-being, and memories of being outdoors in fresh air or enjoying natural beauty. A small number (less than 5% each) mention concepts such as animal habitats, biodiversity or ecosystems, and nature loss.

Q1. This survey is about nature, meaning the physical world including plants, animals, the landscape, freshwater and ocean areas. What first comes to mind for you when you think about nature?



**41%**

**Forests**

*"Forest full of trees"*  
*"Trees are everywhere"*  
*"Trees provide shelter"*



**26%**

**Water**

*"Lake"*  
*"River"*  
*"Sea"*  
*"Beaches"*



**21%**

**Animals**

*"Wildlife"*  
*"Animals running around in their natural habitat"*



**20%**

**Plants**

*"Flowers"*  
*"Grass"*  
*"Green lands"*



**15%**

**Peaceful**

*"Calm"*  
*"Relaxing"*  
*"Well-being"*



**15%**

**Outdoors**

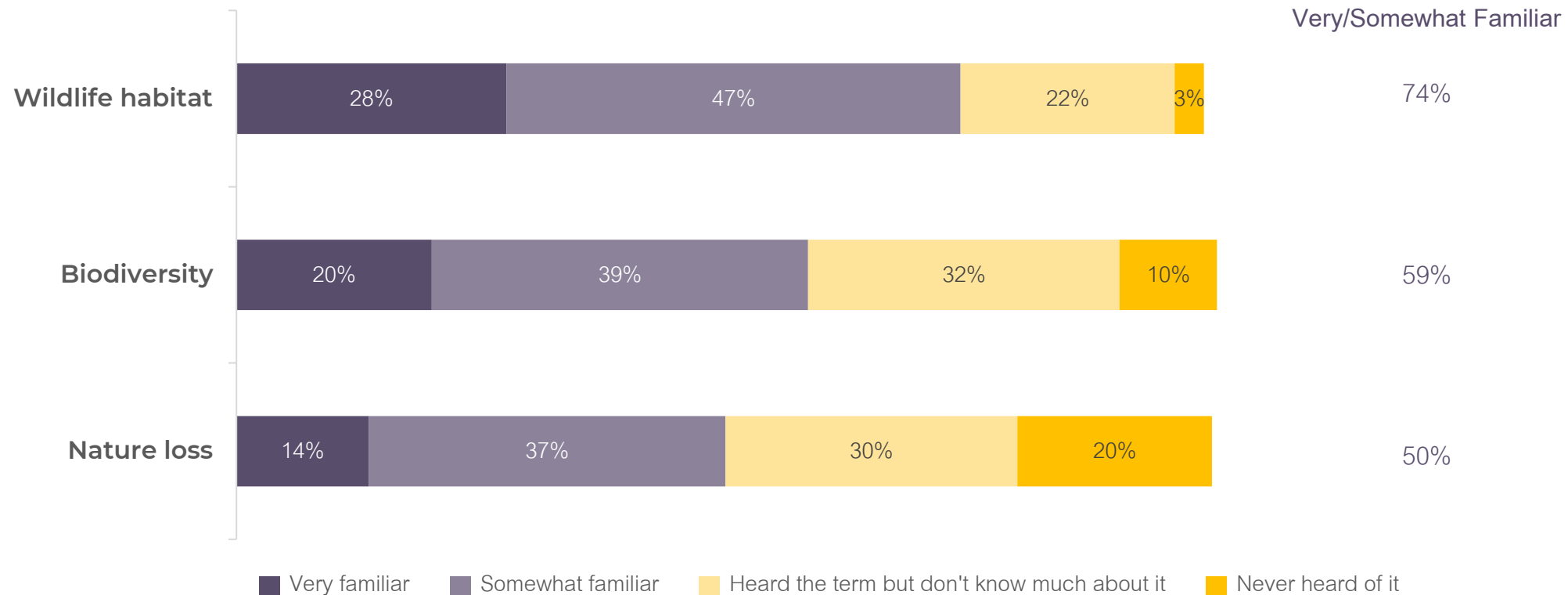
*"Being outside"*  
*"Walk in the woods"*  
*"Open spaces"*



# Perceptions | **Familiarity with terms**

Most Canadians have heard of these terms but with varying levels of familiarity. Only about half are familiar with "nature loss" and six in ten with "biodiversity", meaning these concepts are not universally understood. In general, familiarity with these terms is higher among Progressive Activists, younger Canadians (under 30), those living in urban centres and those with a university education.

Q5. From what you know or have heard, how familiar are you with the following concepts?

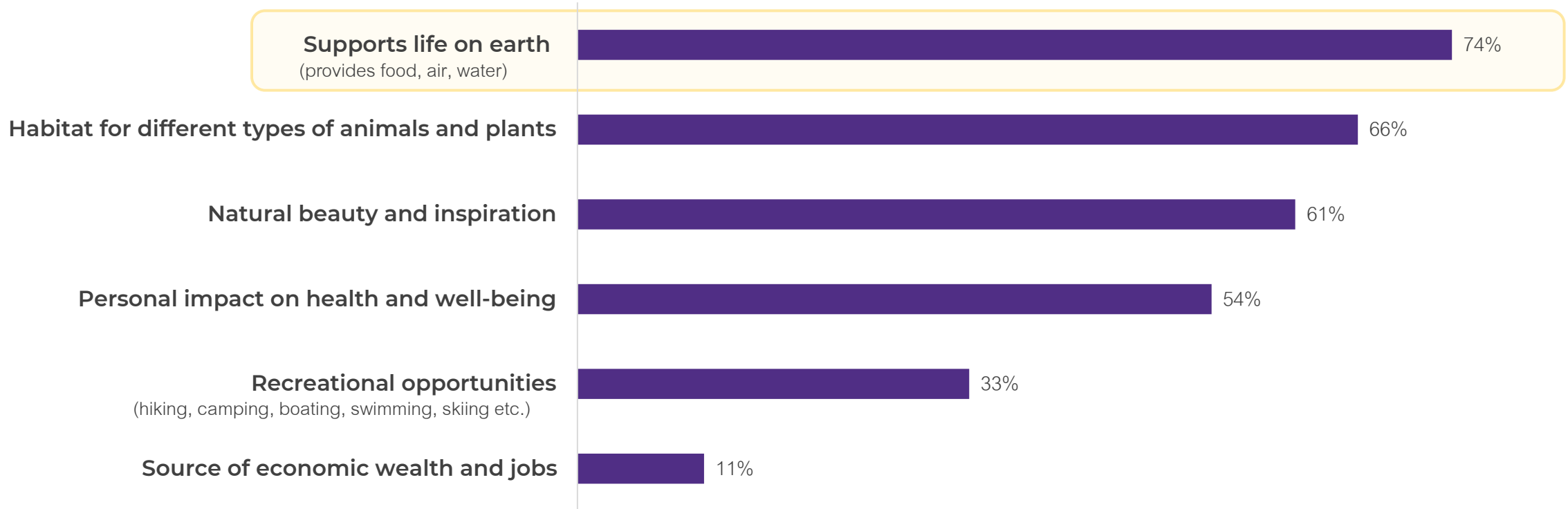


# Perceptions | **Perceived value of nature**

Thinking about the value and benefits from nature, Canadians place the greatest emphasis on nature supporting life on earth. They also view nature as an important source of natural habitats and natural beauty. Some associate nature with well-being and outdoor activities but there is room to boost the connection between nature and well-being, recreation, and economic benefits across audiences.

Q2. Nature can provide a variety of different benefits and people may value nature for different reasons. Which of the following do you, personally, value most about nature? Please rank the three items you value most,

## **RANK 1 – 3 Most Important Benefits**



# Perceptions | State of nature and wildlife in Canada

Canadians hold largely positive perceptions of the state of nature (81% say excellent or good). Just over half (54%) recognize overall health of nature has declined over the past decade, but this is not a universal perspective. Progressive Activists are most likely to perceive a problem and acknowledge a decline in the state of nature.

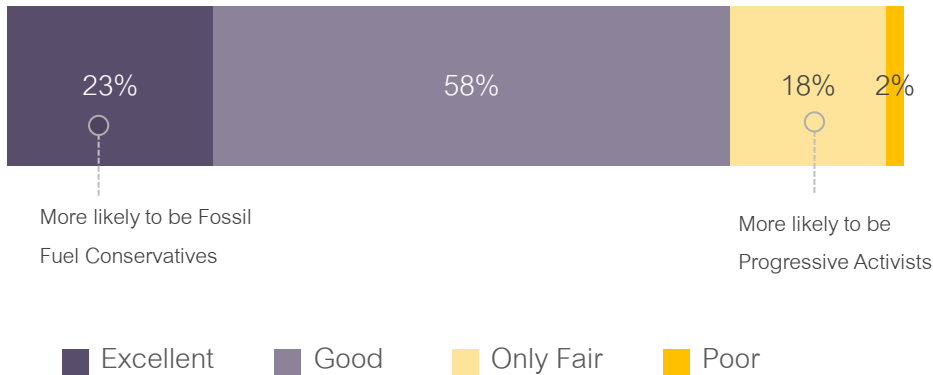
Q3. Canada is home to different types of natural areas - the tundra, forest, grassland, freshwater, wetlands, and ocean ecosystems. From what you know or have heard, how would you rate the health of nature and wildlife in Canada?

Q4. Compared to ten years ago, do you think the overall health of nature and wildlife in Canada has improved, become worse or stayed about the same?

## Current State

# 81%

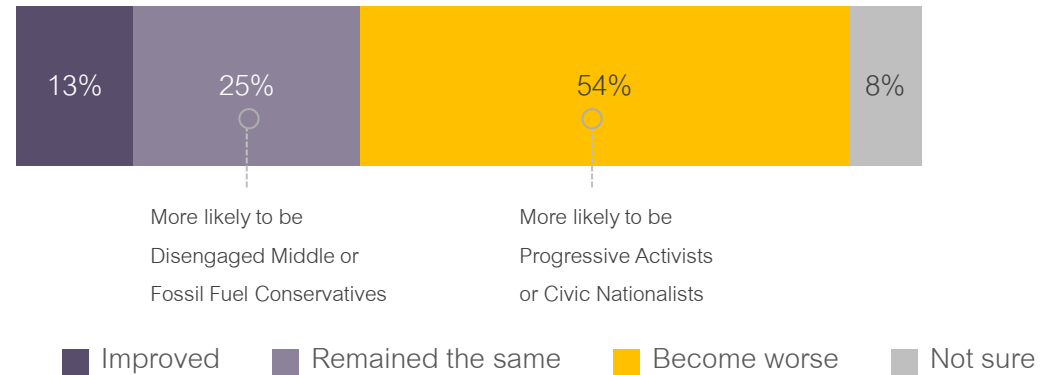
say excellent or good



## Change Over Time

# 54%

say became worse



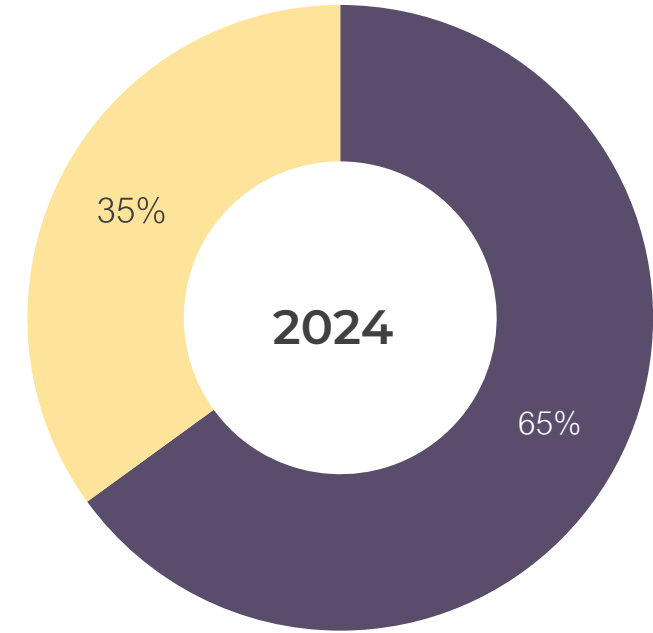
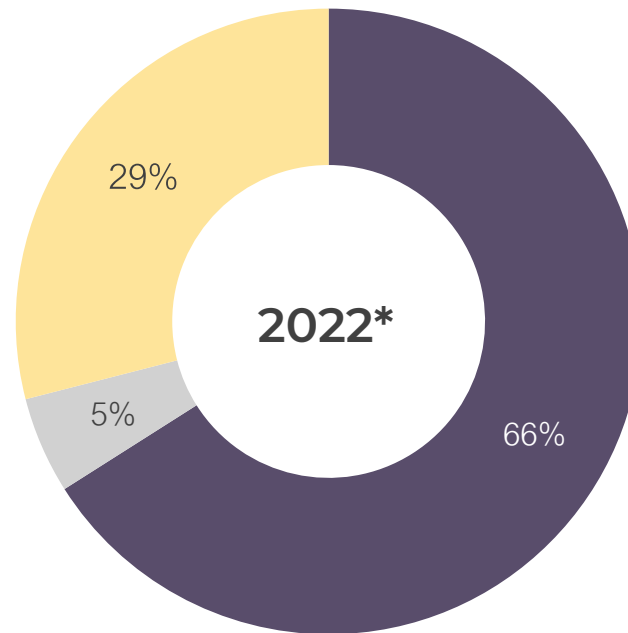
# Perceptions | **Urgency of protecting nature in Canada**

When asked a forced-choice question, two-thirds of Canadians say nature loss is at a crisis point in Canada (a view which is stable since 2022). This contradicts their evaluation of the current health of nature (previous slide), suggesting they are willing to agree but don't fundamentally understand there is a biodiversity crisis. The more environmentally engaged the segment, the more likely they are to perceive a crisis.

Q8. Which of the following statements is closest to your opinion?

*\*Tracking data from 2022 Greenpeace study conducted by Environics Research*

-  Loss of wildlife and nature is at a crisis point in Canada; we need to act now if we are to reverse the damage.
-  Canada has a variety of wildlife and nature; there is no crisis yet; we have decades to protect it.
-  Not sure\*  
\*Option not provided in 2024



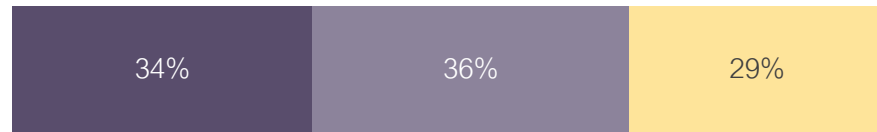
# Perceptions | **Noticing nature loss in your community**

There is a mix of experiences with nature loss.: one-third of Canadians say they have definitely noticed it in their part of the country, another third say they may have done so, and three in ten have not noticed nature loss. Importantly, those who have noticed nature loss are more likely to hold a negative view of the current state of nature, and to perceive a biodiversity crisis.

Q6. Nature loss is the decline or disappearance of natural environments and the variety of living things (plants, animals, etc.) within them. Have you noticed any nature loss in your part of the country?

# 34%

noticed nature loss



- Yes, I have definitely noticed nature loss
- Yes, I have possibly noticed nature loss
- No, I have not noticed nature loss

## More likely to have *definitely* noticed nature loss:

- Progressive Activists 51%
- Indigenous 50%
- Nova Scotia 47%
- Younger Canadians (under 30) 41%
- Civic Nationalists 36%, Centrist Liberals 36%
- British Columbia 39%, New Brunswick 39%

# Perceptions | **Examples of nature loss in your community**

Those who noticed nature loss in their area most often cited examples of lost greenspace, trees, and natural vegetation, linking this to urbanization and development. Other common examples include seeing fewer animals in natural spaces, seeing other animals in the city where they aren't supposed to be, destruction from natural disasters, and melting glaciers.

Q7. What kinds of nature loss have you noticed? BASE: Those who have definitely or probably noticed nature loss N=1,072

## Top Example



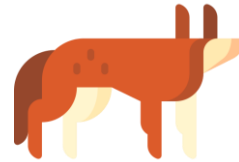
### **Loss of greenspace, trees, vegetation**

Fields, parks, forests, and farmland that are lost due to urbanization and urban sprawl.



### **Seeing less of certain species**

Seeing fewer birds, butterflies, fish, wildflowers, bees, deer, etc. in natural spaces.



### **Seeing more of displaced species**

Seeing coyotes, fox, and other animals in the city because their natural habitats are gone.



### **Destruction from natural disasters**

Loss of forests and other ecosystems due to forest fires, hurricanes, tornados, etc.



### **Melting glaciers or less snowfall**

Loss of glaciers and ice on mountains, ice melting faster and changing seasons/less snowfall during the winters.

# Perceptions | **Examples of nature loss in your community**

The quotes below demonstrate how Canadians describe nature loss and the contexts that they are seeing examples of nature loss in their parts of the country.

Q7. What kinds of nature loss have you noticed? BASE: Those who have noticed nature loss N=1,072

## QUOTES – Descriptions of top types of nature loss from respondents



### Loss of greenspace, trees, vegetation

*"They built in a new district in my town and to create a row of houses they had to drain a swamp and cut all trees in that area. This was a unique ecosystem in Montreal and most of it is gone now."*

*"More trees are dying or being cut down for housing and roads."*

*"The main Toronto region has less greenery, it's only condos now. Everywhere construction for new condos."*

*"Draining water and wetlands for farming when many areas are left not farmable."*

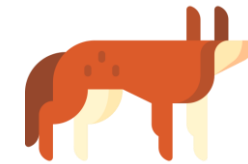


### Seeing less of certain species

*"Buildings have replaced areas where wildflowers used to grow. Can't find wild crocus plants within the city like I used to on the farm."*

*"The number of certain animals has gone down, the way in which certain plants have stopped existing as long."*

*"I've noticed the nature loss of several animals because they have gone extinct. Whether that was from being killed or losing their habitats and then not re-creating as a result."*



### Seeing more of displaced species

*"With the new business buildings going up, I see so many more woods animals on the street or in the lawn. There are more animals dead on the side of the road now than there ever was."*

*"More coyotes and other wild animals are wandering into urban areas since they can no longer sustain themselves in their nature habitats that are eroded by humans and climate change."*

# BIODIVERSITY **CAUSES & IMPACTS**

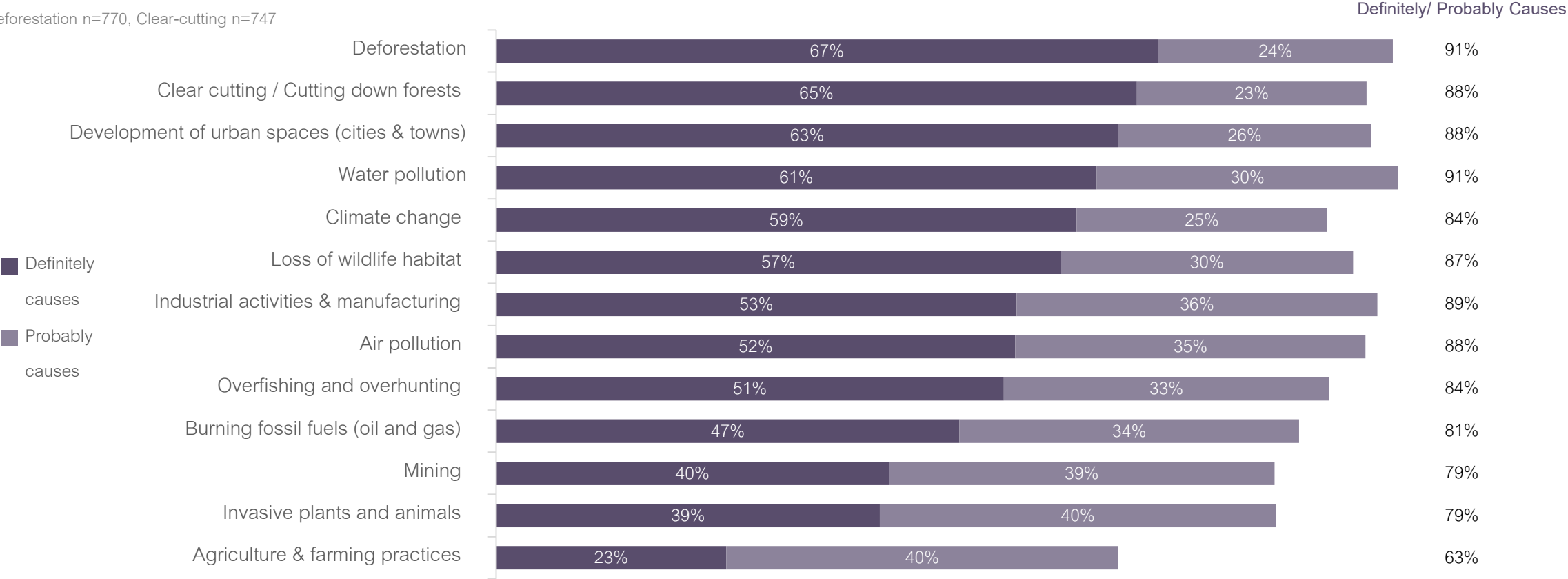


# Causes | Perceived causes of nature loss

Canadians acknowledge multiple causes of nature loss but don't particularly differentiate between them. They place the most onus on deforestation, clear-cutting and urban development. They are less likely to place responsibility for nature loss on specific sectors like oil and gas (burning fossil fuels), mining and agriculture.

Q9. From what you know or have heard, to what extent does each of the following cause nature loss?

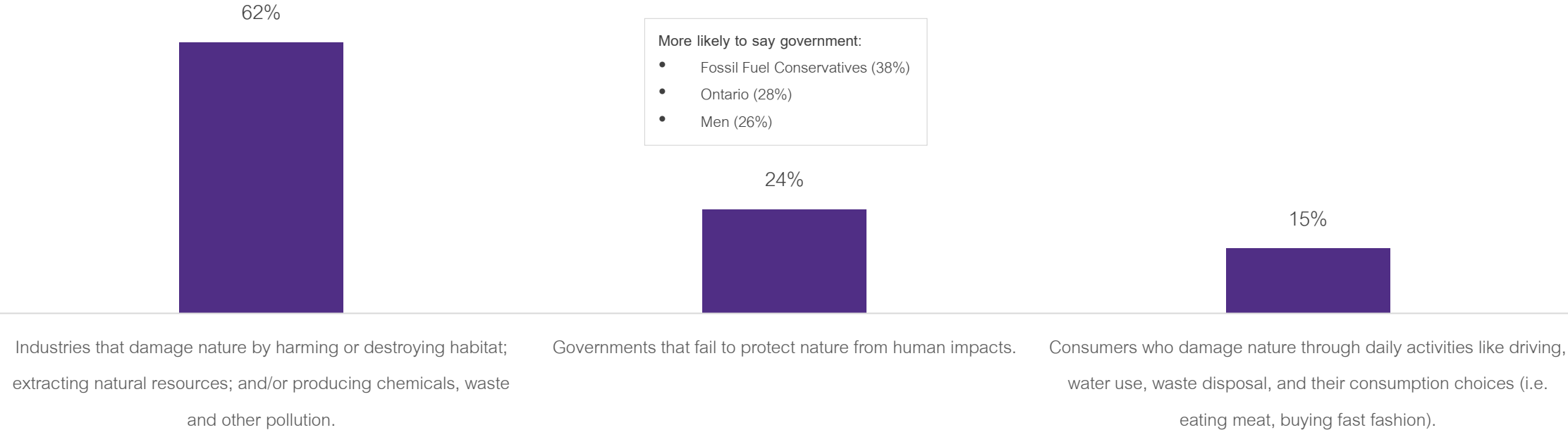
Deforestation n=770, Clear-cutting n=747



# Causes | **Greatest threat to nature and wildlife**

However, when forced to choose, Canadians say business and industry is the greatest threat to nature and wildlife, well ahead of governments (who fail to protect nature) and consumers (who damage nature through daily activities). Canadians are more comfortable criticizing industry in general, less so specific sectors (where many Canadians work or benefit from).

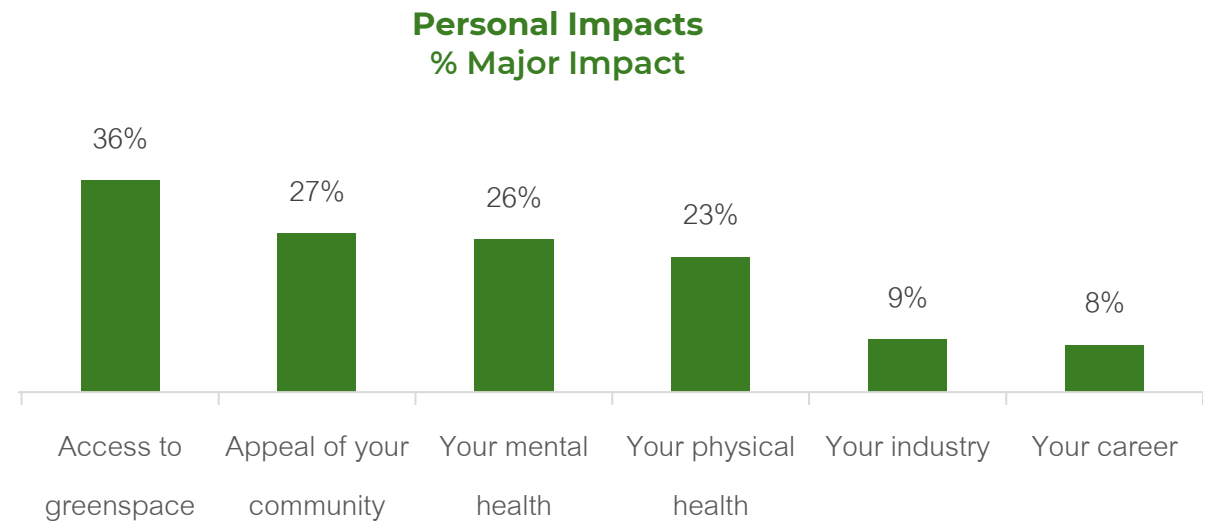
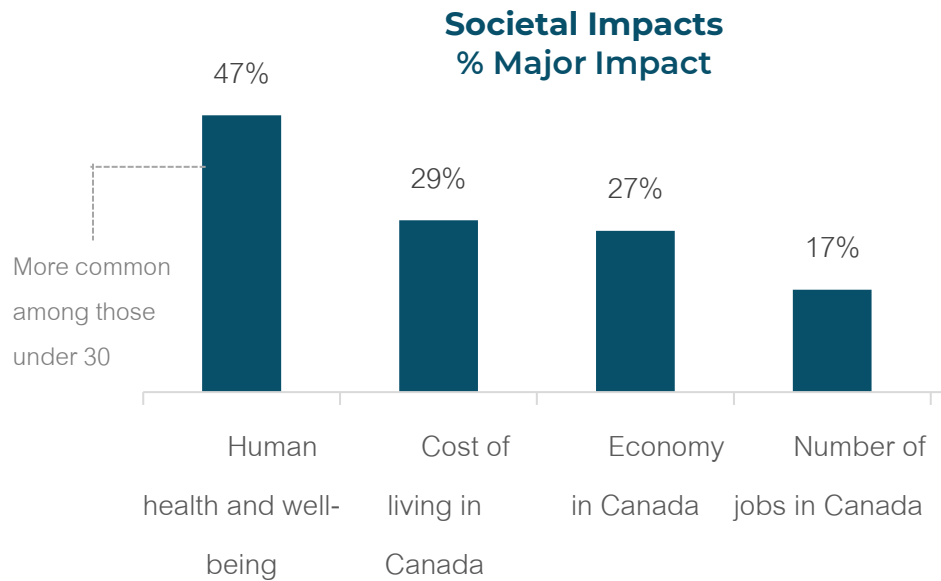
Q10. In your view, which is the greatest threat to nature and wildlife in Canada?



# Impacts | Perceived impacts of nature loss

Canadians are more likely to buy-in to the risks nature loss can pose to society at large but tend to downplay the risks that nature loss could pose to them personally. Those who have definitely noticed nature loss in their community have a greater understanding of the impact it has on all these aspects.

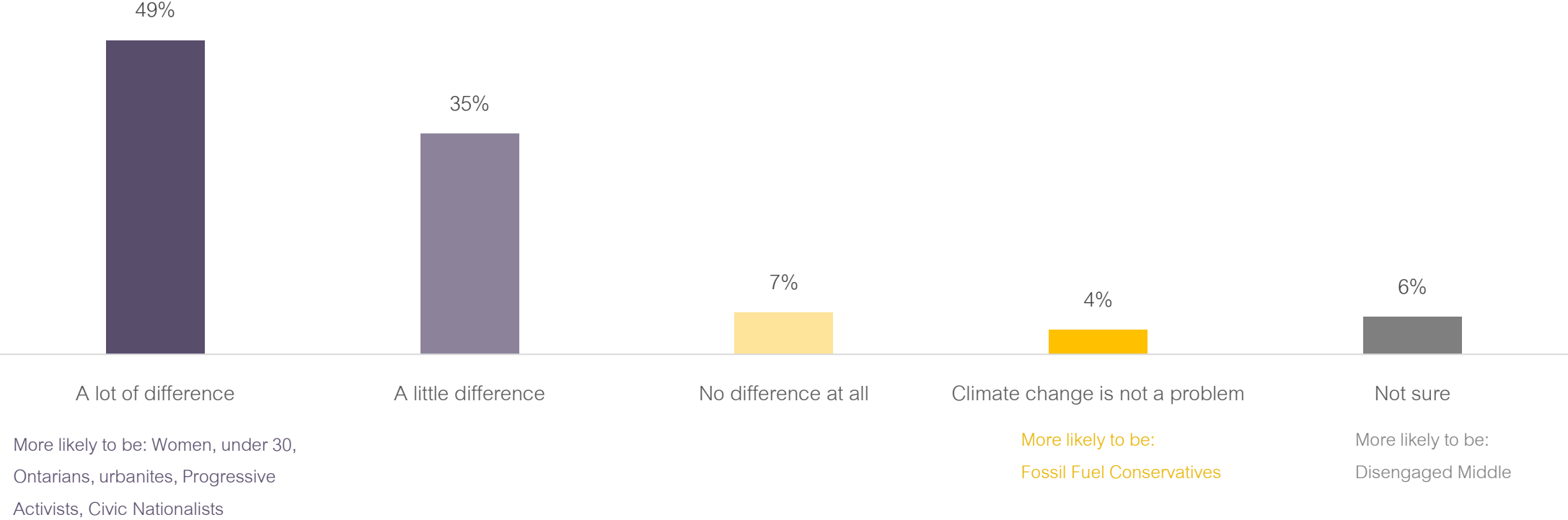
Q11. How do you think nature loss will impact each of the following?



# Impacts | **Connecting nature protection to climate action**

There are mixed views about whether nature protection can help address climate change: half of Canadians think it will make a big difference, but the remainder are unconvinced. The most optimistic are women, younger Canadians and the more environmentally engaged segments.

Q13. To what extent do you think protecting nature and addressing nature loss will make a difference to solving climate change?

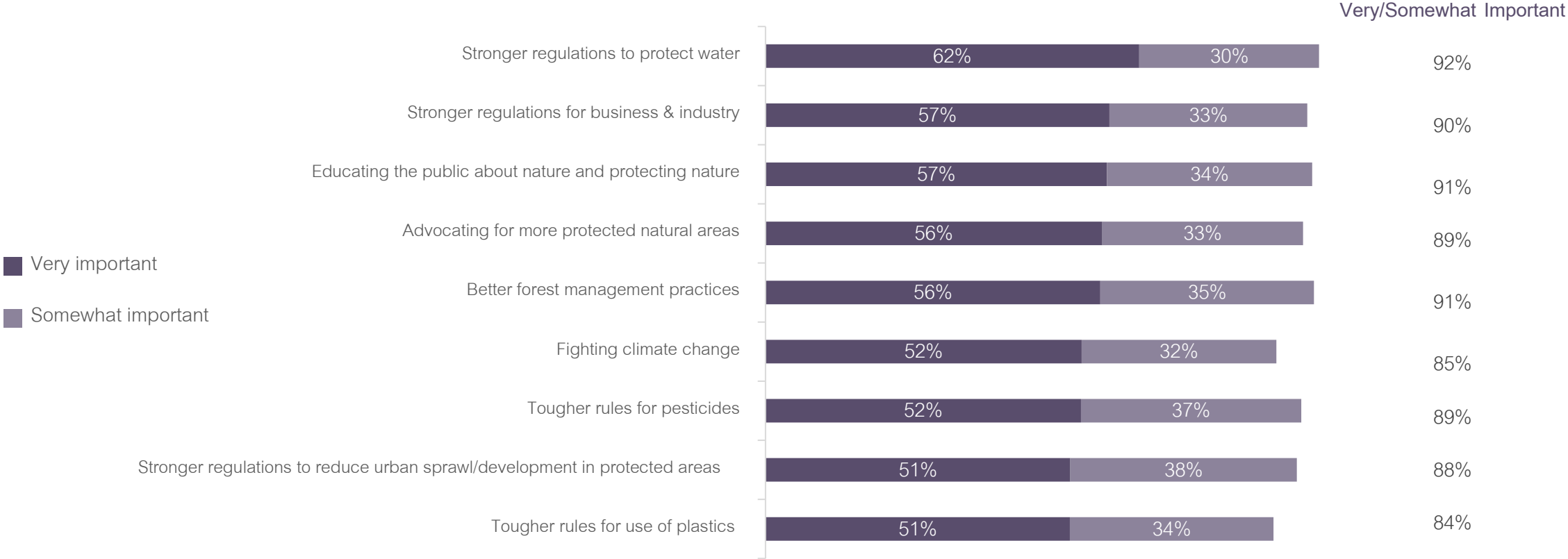


# BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT & SOLUTIONS

# Solutions | Important actions to address nature loss

Canadians generally place high importance on all actions to address nature loss (more than half rate each action as very important), but the lack of differentiation indicates they lack true understanding of what will be most effective. For instance, despite identifying urbanization as a major cause of nature loss, regulations for urban sprawl do not top the list of important solutions.

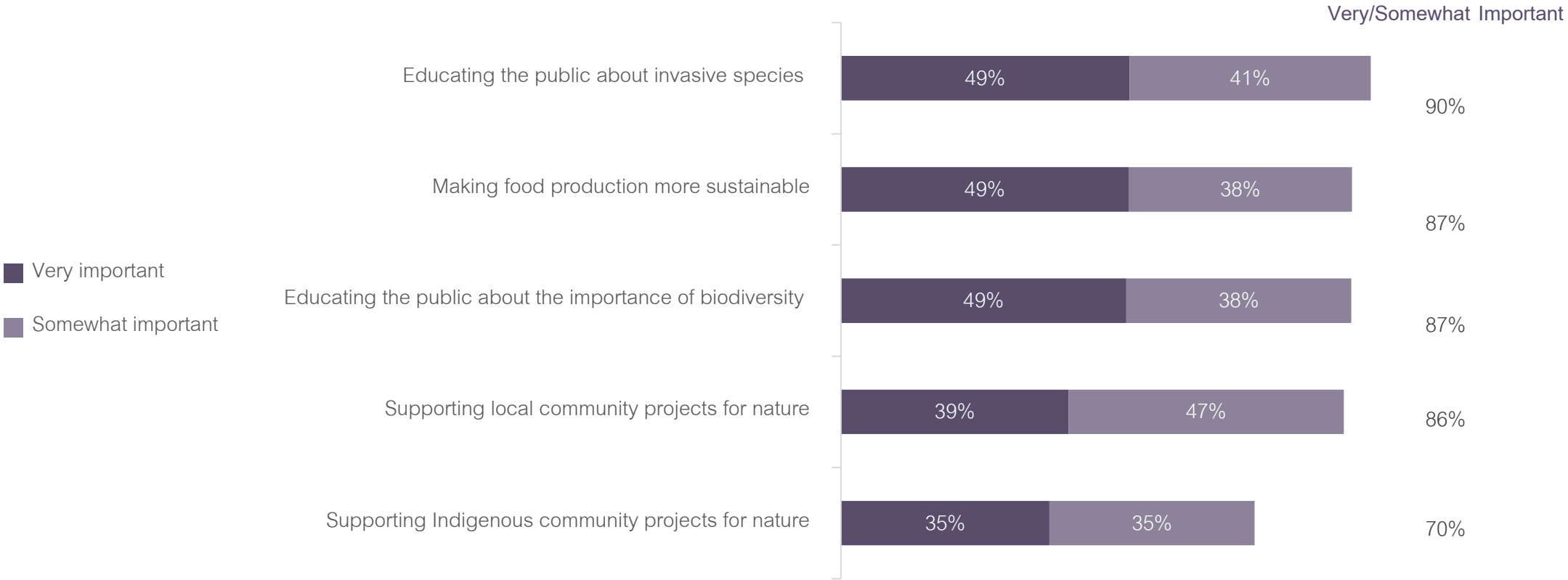
Q14. Among the range of possible things that can be done to protect nature and address nature loss, how important do you consider each of the following?



# Solutions | Important actions to address nature loss (cont'd)

Compared to other solutions, Canadians place relatively less importance on the value of local community projects and Indigenous action as ways to protect nature, indicating a notable gap between public and expert knowledge.

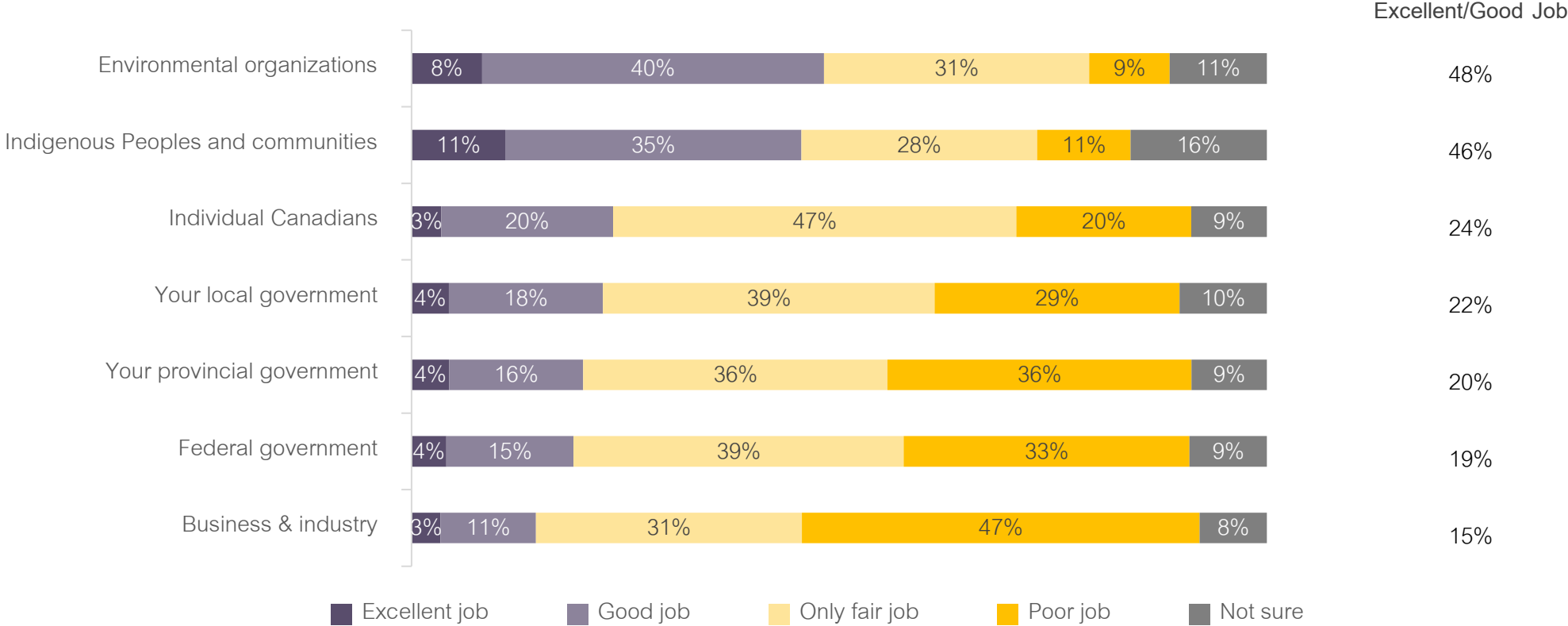
Q14. Among the range of possible things that can be done to protect nature and address nature loss, how important do you consider each of the following?



# Solutions | Performance of different actors/stakeholders

Canadians express moderate views on the performance of different actors in addressing nature loss (either “good” or “only fair”), suggesting they do not know enough to truly judge performance. Perceptions are most positive for eNGOs and Indigenous peoples, but still leaves room for improvement.

Q15. How would you rate the efforts of each of the following to address and reverse nature loss? Would you say they are doing an excellent job, a good job, an only fair job, or a poor job?





# Solutions | **Awareness of 30 by 30 conservation goal**

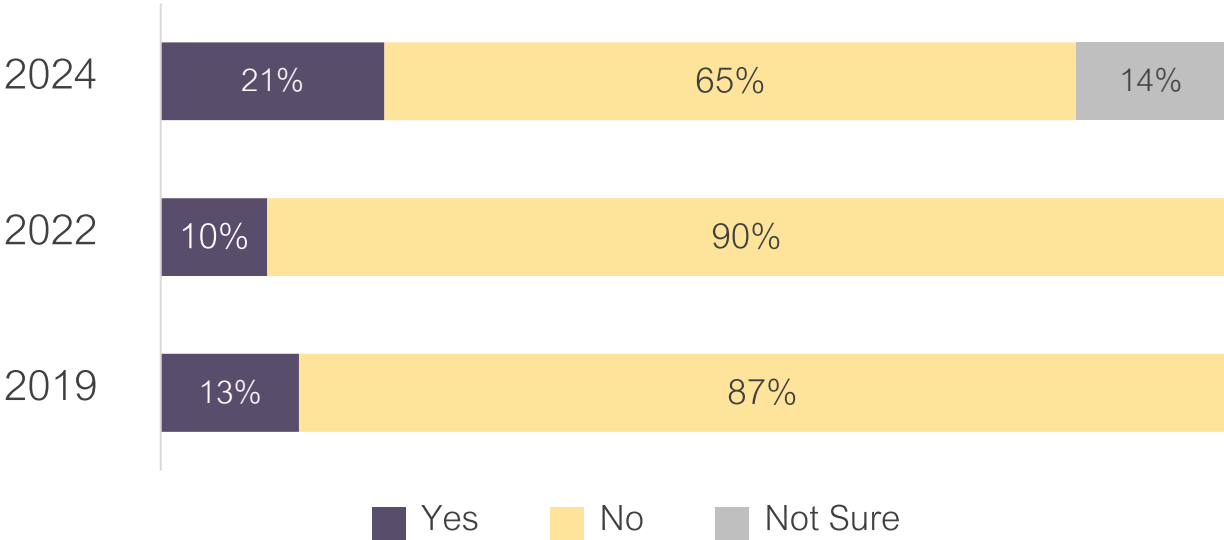
Awareness of the federal conservation target has increased since 2022, but still remains limited with two in ten Canadians saying they had heard of the '30 by 30' target. Awareness is higher among those under 30 (33%) and Progressive Activists (27%) but still fairly limited even among this more environmentally engaged group.

Q16. The federal government has set the goal of conserving 30 percent of Canada's land and waters in nature reserves and other protected areas by 2030. This goal is commonly referred to as the 30 by 30 target. Had you heard of this goal before now?

*\*Tracking data from 2022 SeaBlue study conducted by Environics Research*

# 21%

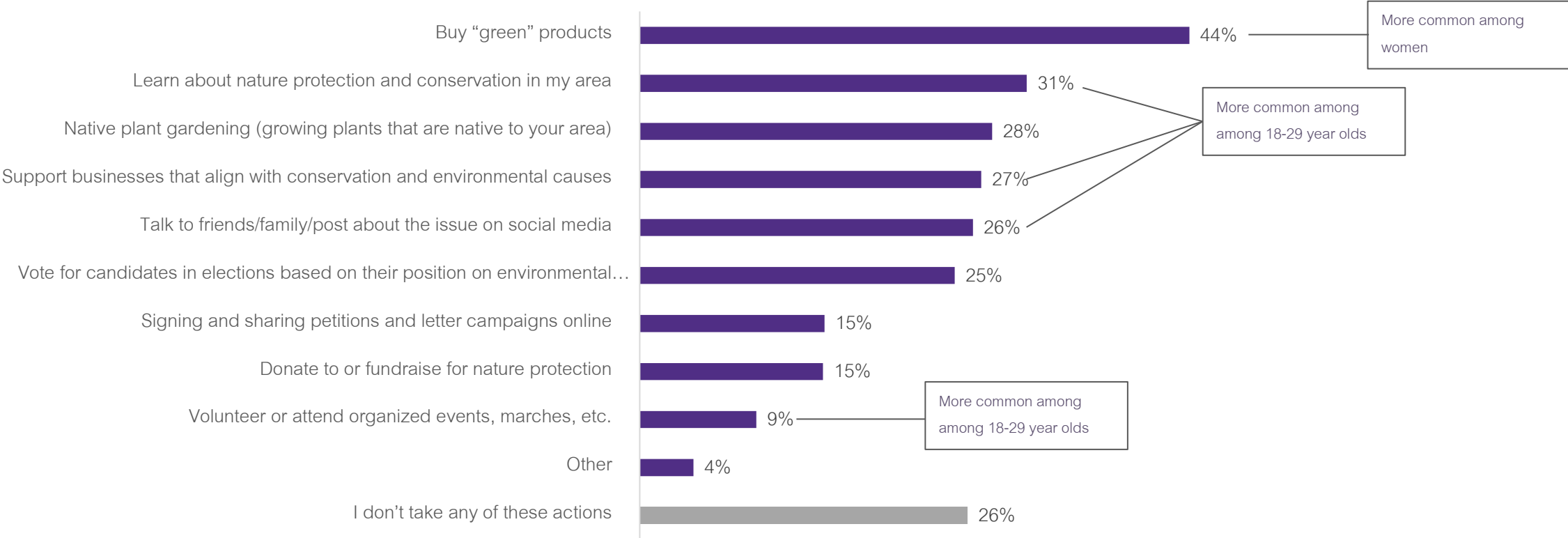
of Canadians say they are aware of the 30 by 30 goal.



# Solutions | **Personal actions taken to protect nature**

Roughly seven in ten have taken at least one action in the past year. Buying green products is the most common action reported, even among Progressive Activists. Donating and volunteering are least common. The results suggest Canadians could benefit from learning how they can take action to protect nature.

Q17. Which of the following actions, if any, have you, yourself, taken to support nature protection in the past year?



# COMMUNICATIONS **MESSAGE TESTING**

# Communications | Messages that encourage support

Overall, messages that focus on nature were considered more likely to encourage support than messages focusing on forests or species. The top performing statement (54%) aligns with the most valued aspect of nature – that it supports life. This longer nature statement and the shorter forests statement were more appealing to those in lower socioeconomic tiers, highlighting more accessible messaging frames.

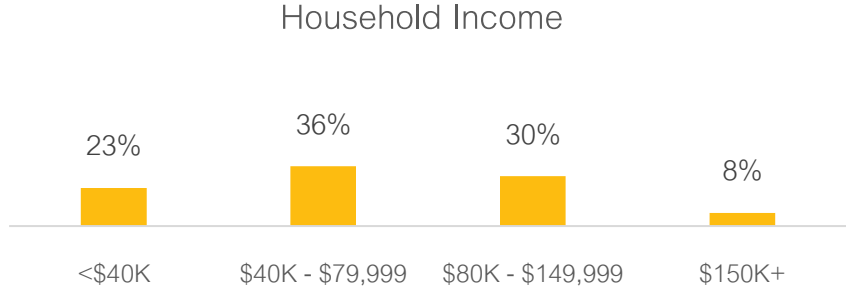
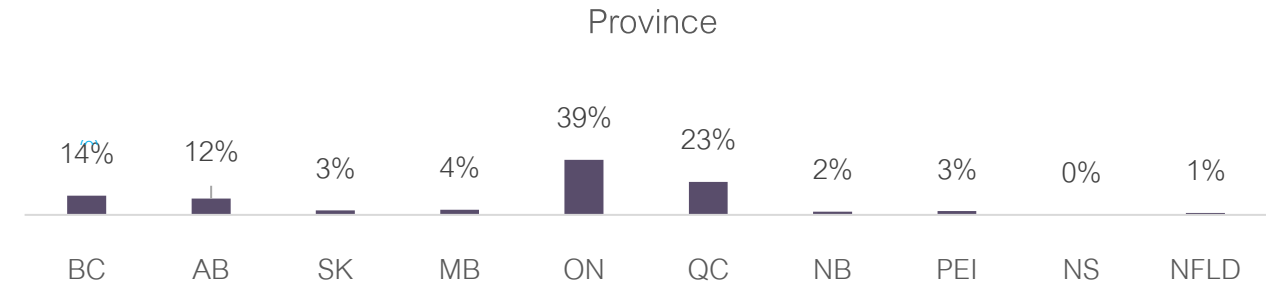
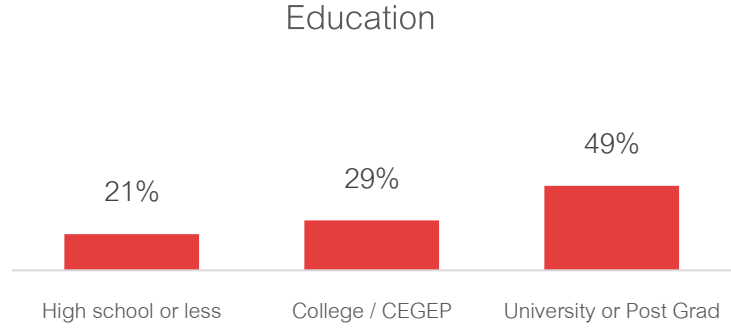
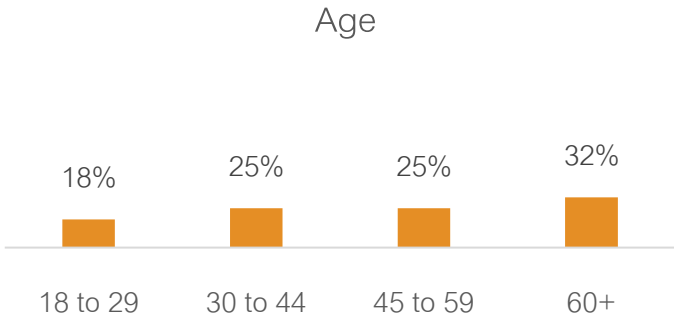
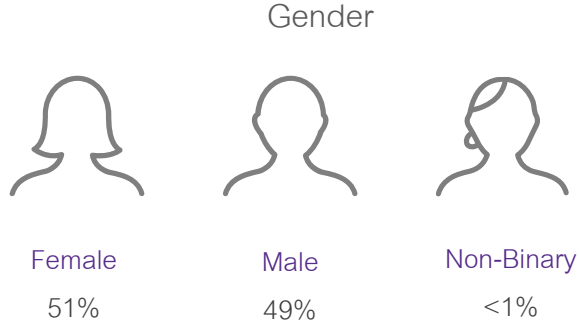
Q18. Here are some statements that might or might not encourage people to support initiatives to reduce and reverse nature loss. Please indicate how convincing you believe each statement would be at encouraging others to support action on nature loss.



# DEMOGRAPHICS

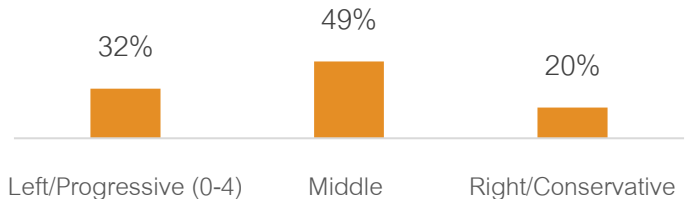
# **RESPONDENT PROFILE**

# Demographics | Respondent Profile

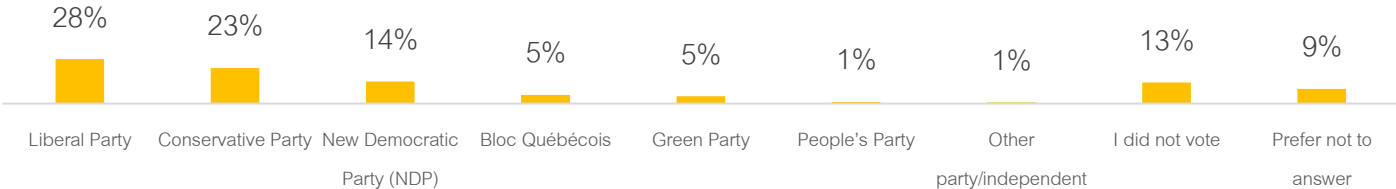


# Demographics | Respondent Profile

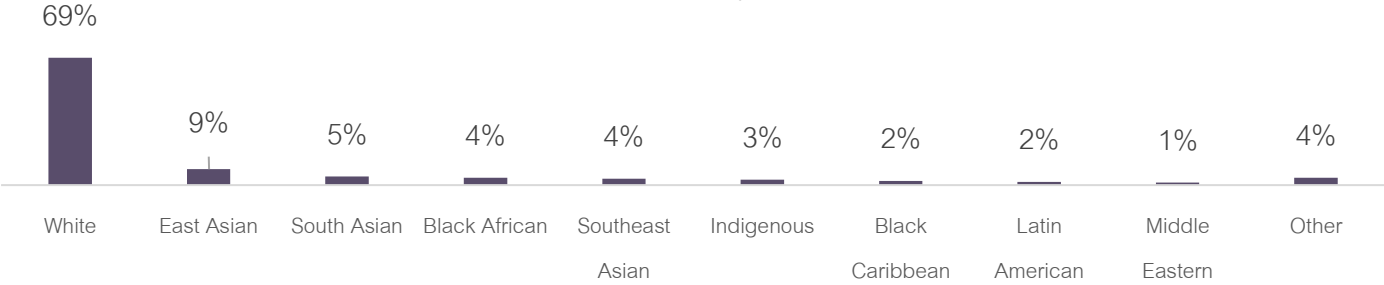
Political Leaning



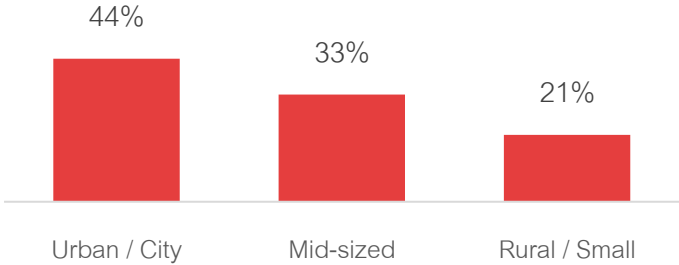
Federal Vote (2021 Federal Election)



Ethnicity



Urbanity



# Thank you.

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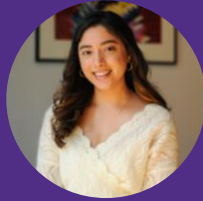


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