

LOVE YOUR LAKE



2013-2019
SUMMARY
REPORT



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ABOUT LOVE YOUR LAKE

Shorelines are one of the most unique places on Earth. Individual actions can have a huge impact on this delicate interface. But how do we know if shorelines are healthy? The Love Your Lake program assesses the health of a lake's shoreline and encourages shoreline property owners to take voluntary stewardship actions.

Love Your Lake is a partnership program between Watersheds Canada and the Canadian Wildlife Federation. The program is delivered by local conservation groups and lake organizations. This program connects shoreline property owners with the information they need to make smart land management choices that improve wildlife habitat, water quality, and the overall health of a lake.

The Love Your Lake program has reached 39,567 properties on 163 lakes since its inception in 2013. Through a network of engaged lake associations, regional partner groups, and active lake stewards, the program has expanded into four provinces: British Columbia (2019), Alberta (2016-2018), Saskatchewan (2016-2019), and Ontario (2013-2019).




PROPERTY REPORTS



A detailed, peer-reviewed protocol is used to assess individual properties on a lake. Locally trained staff evaluate shorelines, noting the degree of impact on and near the shore.

Since 2013, almost 11,300 property reports have been ordered. These property-specific reports outline voluntary actions each shoreline property owner can take to improve the health of their lake. Topics include: the importance of a healthy shoreline, shoreline buffers, erosion, lawns, concrete shorelines, docks, drinking water sources, septic systems, sustainable agriculture, shoreline access and landscaping, and wildlife habitat.

The Importance of a Healthy Shoreline



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10 to 15 metres of land that surround lakes and rivers are responsible for 90 per cent of lake life, which is born, raised and fed in these areas. Sometimes called the ribbon of life, these areas are up to 500 per cent more diverse than other areas upland from lakes and rivers.

THE FUNCTIONS OF A HEALTHY SHORELINE

1. **Help Maintain Clean Water/Water Quality**
The shoreline vegetation on your property is vital to retaining, treating and filtering surface runoff before it can reach the water. Runoff in rain and melted snow that runs along the surface of the ground. Runoff can contain pollutants such as fertilizers, pesticides, sediment, manure, pet feces, trash, motor fluids (oil, grease, gas) and road salt. These pollutants have negative effects on our waterways: nutrients act as fertilizers, which stimulate algae and plant growth contributing to algal blooms; pathogens can contaminate drinking water and sediment affects fish habitat and nursery areas.
2. **Prevent Soil Erosion**
The underground root systems of shoreline vegetation help keep soil in place and prevent topsoil from being exposed and washed away into the lake or river.
3. **Reduce Impacts of Flooding**
Well-vegetated shorelines provide barriers against moving water by slowing the water's movement downstream and by reducing the force, height and volume of floodwaters. This allows them to spread out horizontally across the floodplain, thereby reducing the potential for damage to your property.

Healthy shorelines are vital to maintaining the overall health of lakes and other bodies of water. Shorelines help filter pollutants, protect against erosion and provide habitat for fish and other wildlife.

Shorelines are some of the most ecologically productive places on Earth. They support plants, microorganisms, insects, amphibians, birds, mammals and fish. The first

The Importance of a HEALTHY SHORELINE

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Wildlife Habitat: What You Can Do



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Wildlife Habitat: WHAT YOU CAN DO

Wildlife provides us with many enjoyable and beneficial activities from bird watching and wildlife photography to pest control, seed dispersal, nutrient cycling and pollination, to name only a few.

You may have some of the following property features that help to attract wildlife species:

Cavity Trees
Large trees with hollow cavities are a vital source of food, shelter and safety for many species. In Ontario, more than 50 species of birds and mammals (including pileated woodpeckers and barred owls) depend on cavity trees for nesting, raising young, roosting, feeding, storing food, escaping predators and hibernating. By retaining cavity trees on your property, you provide important habitat for wildlife.

Fallen Logs
Fallen logs are essential habitat for small mammals, such as moles, certain woodpeckers, toads and many insects. As the log rots, reptiles and amphibians lay their eggs in the moist wood. A decaying log is also great habitat for beetles and ants that burrow under the bark or lay eggs.

Coniferous Forest
Cooler forests, also known as deer wintering yards, are areas of mainly coniferous trees (pine, hemlock, cedar, spruce) with a canopy closure of more than 60 per cent, which provides shelter, ease of movement and protection from predators. The land surrounding the core area is usually mixed or deciduous forest.

Mast Producing Trees
Mast is fruit and seeds produced by maple, elm and ash, and nuts from oak, black walnut and beech. Mast is the primary fat and winter food for most forest wildlife species as they build fat reserves for hibernation.

WILDLIFE HABITAT: WHAT YOU CAN DO

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IMAGE 1. Sample shoreline property report pages outlining voluntary actions individuals can take to improve the health of their lake.

VALUES SURVEY

Prior to taking part in the Love Your Lake program, property owners are encouraged to fill in a values survey. The values survey identifies what is important to property owners about their lake. Our goal is to get shoreline property owners thinking about what they value about their lake and inspire actions that reflect those values once they receive their property report.

In total, 2,617 value surveys have been gathered from 2013-2019 from participants across Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Alberta. The year with the highest response rate was in 2014 (24%), while the lowest response rate was in 2019 (7%). The overall average value survey response rate was 15%. Figure 1 outlines the response distribution from 2013-2019.

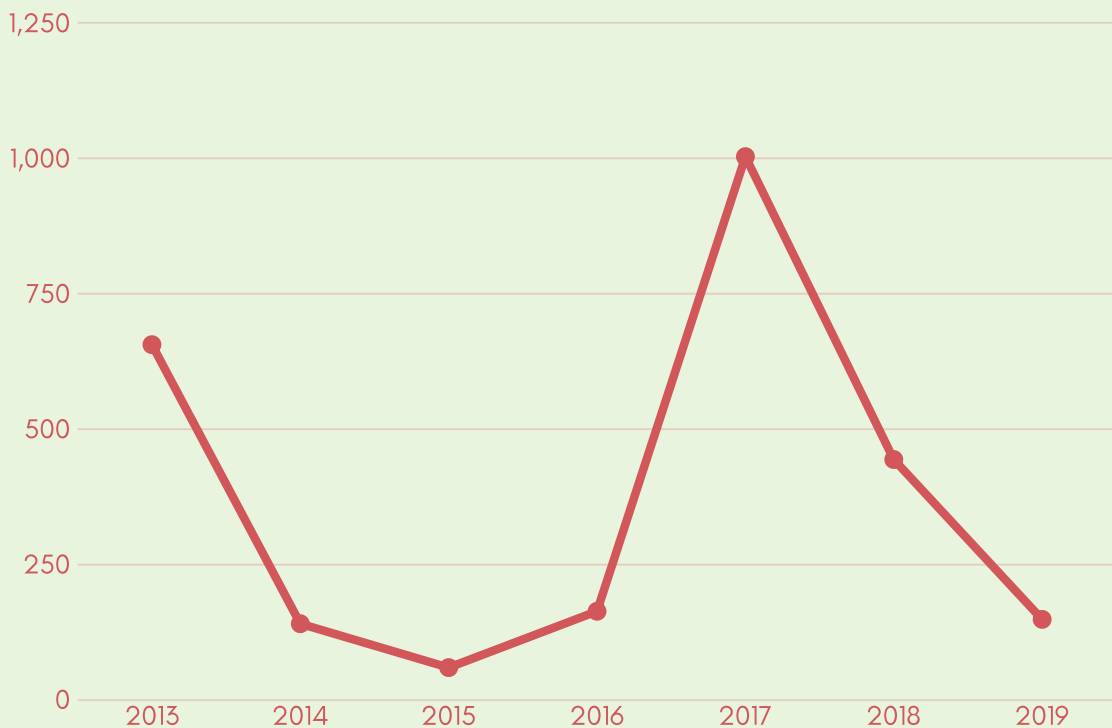


FIGURE 1.

The distribution of total value survey responses for each year the Love Your Lake program has been delivered (2013-2019).

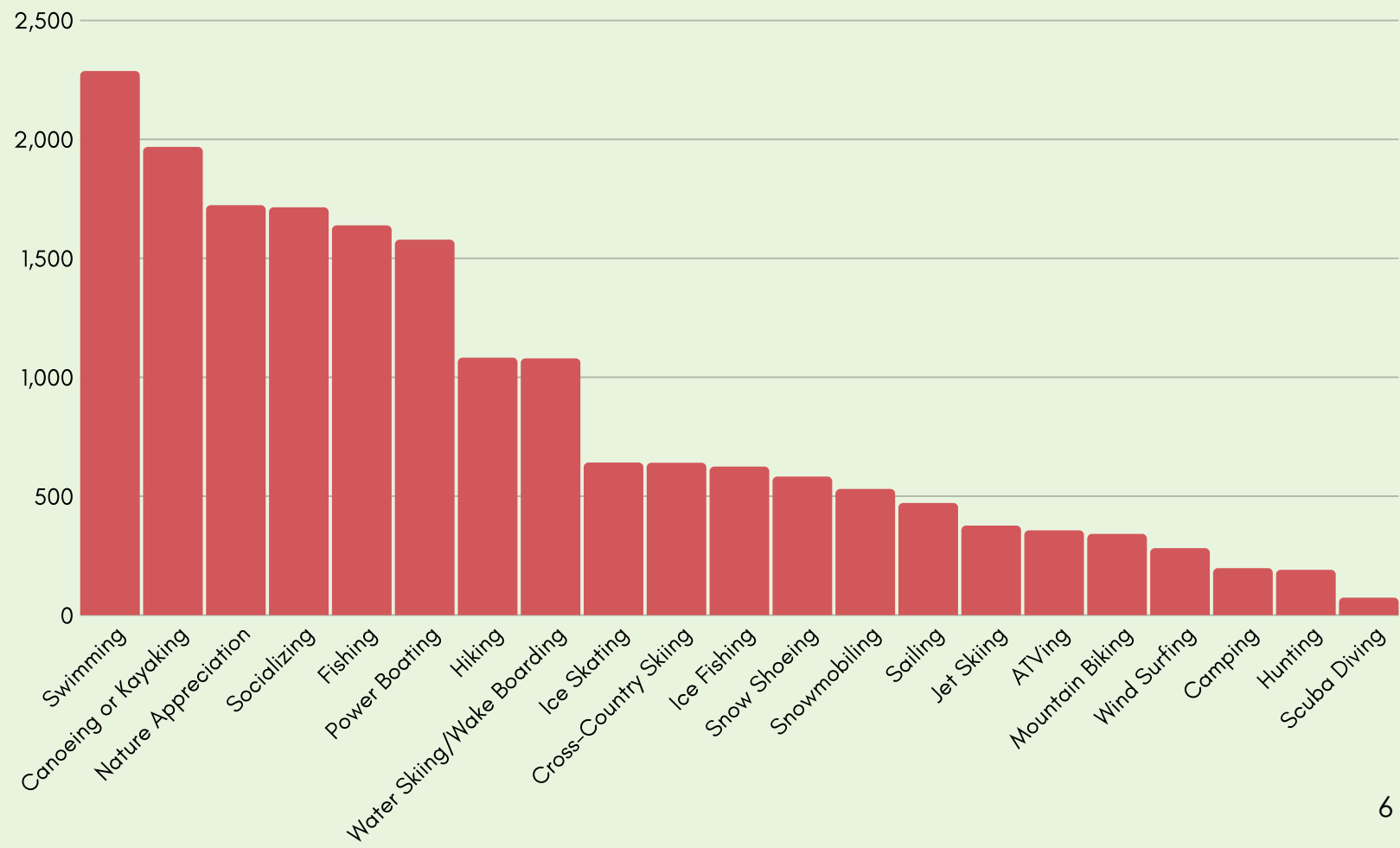
VALUES SURVEY RESULTS

Of the 2,617 respondents to the value surveys, 1,694 (65%) identified as seasonal residents, 778 (30%) identified as permanent residents, 182 (7%) identified as owning vacant property, 40 (2%) identified as operating a business, 37 (1%) identified as operating a farm, and 16 (1%) identified as renting.

Of the 1,694 seasonal residents, 1,740 (66%) said they do not plan to become permanent residents, and 256 (10%) said they do plan to become permanent residents. Time spent on lakes varied from 1 year to as many as 200 years. Figure 2 shows the popularity of various recreational activities from most to least popular.

FIGURE 2.

Top recreational activities enjoyed by 2,617 residents participating in the Love Your Lake program (2013-2019).

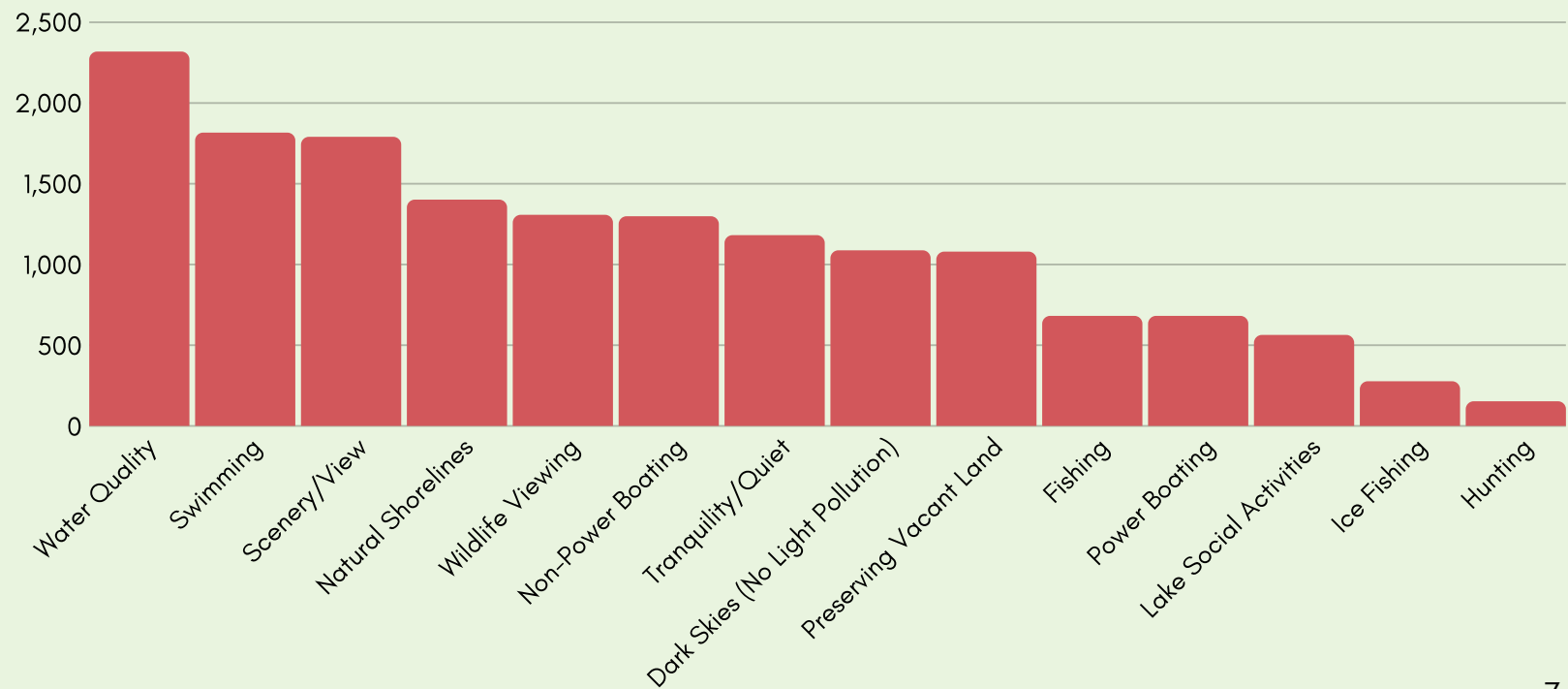




The most important elements, valued for their impact on personal enjoyment of the lake, included Water Quality, Swimming, and Scenery/View. Surveys asked respondents to rate each activity from 1 to 5 with 5 being extremely important and 1 being not important. Figure 3 shows the distribution of "extremely important" ranked values for each element.

FIGURE 3.

Responses for elements affecting personal enjoyment of lakes, as identified by 2,617 shoreline property owners participating in Love Your Lake (2013-2019).



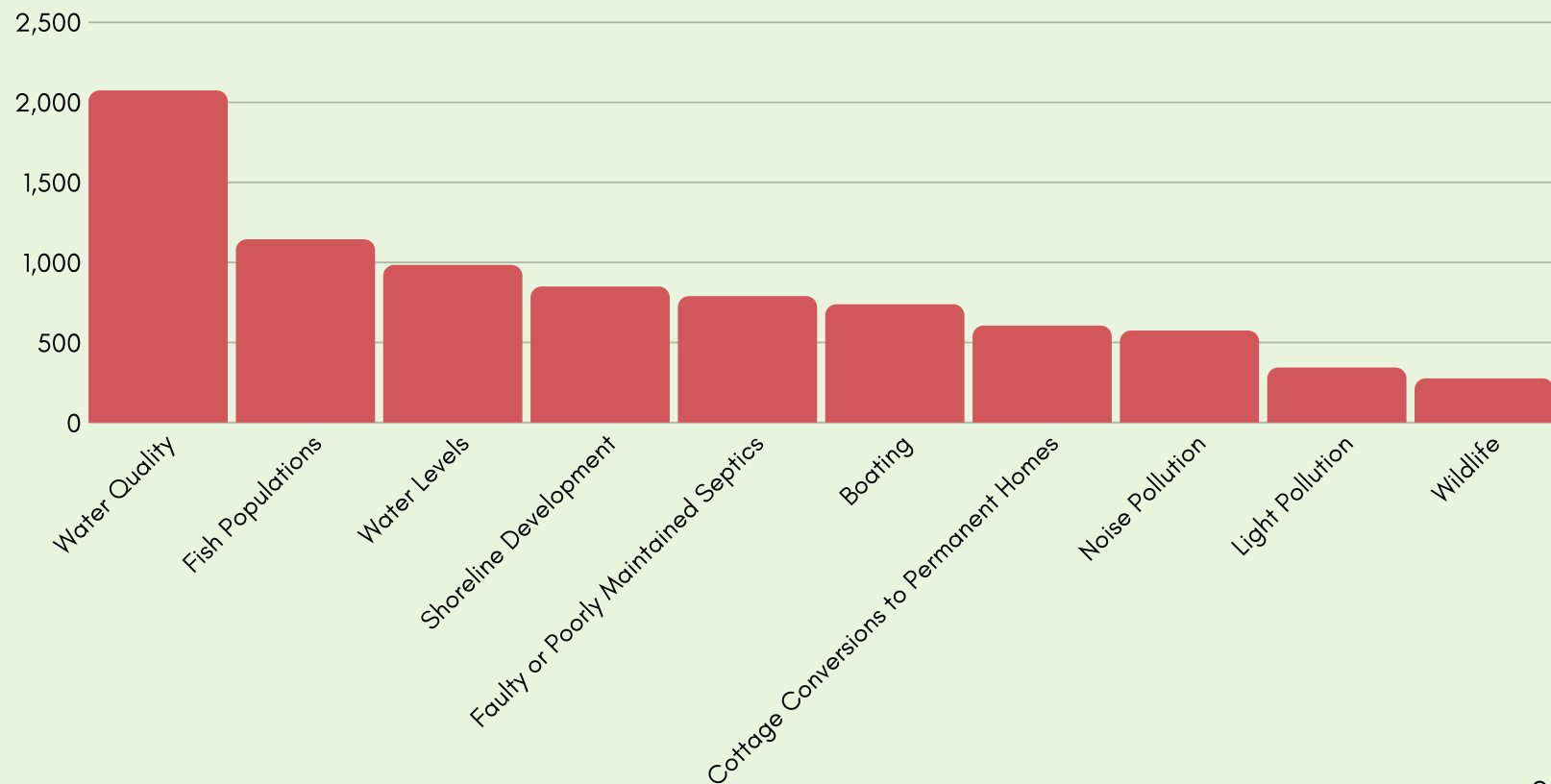
TOP ISSUES

The most frequently identified issue facing Canadian lakes, provided by the 2,617 respondents, was Water Quality, followed by Fish Populations, Water Levels, and Shoreline Development. Figure 4 summarizes the number of respondents that identified each issue as a top concern.



FIGURE 4.

Top issues facing Canadian lakes in order of most popular to least popular, as identified by 2,617 shoreline property owners participating in Love Your Lake (2013-2019).



TOP ACTIONS

The most frequently identified actions shoreline property owners believe would benefit their lake and lake community included:

- Create or enforce stricter rules for new development;
- Undertake a lake management plan; and
- Provide education materials to property owners on a variety of subjects.

Table 1 summarizes the number and percentage of respondents that identified each action as beneficial to their lake and lake community.

TABLE 1.

Actions to benefit lakes and the community, as identified by 2,617 shoreline property owners participating in Love Your Lake (2013-2019).

Undertake Actions	# Responses	% of Total	Rank
Create or enforce stricter rules for new development	856	33%	1
Undertake a lake management plan	829	32%	2
Provide education materials to property owners	813	31%	3
Engage in a septic re-inspection program	690	26%	4
Limit boat wakes near shore	670	26%	4
Plant trees and shrubs along shore	662	25%	5
Undertake more water quality testing	591	23%	6
Engage more property owners in lake activities	557	21%	7
Improve communication between property owners and lake association	503	19%	8
Create or enforce stricter rules for cottage conversions	389	15%	9
Stop mowing grass by the shoreline	313	12%	10
Nothing	62	2%	11

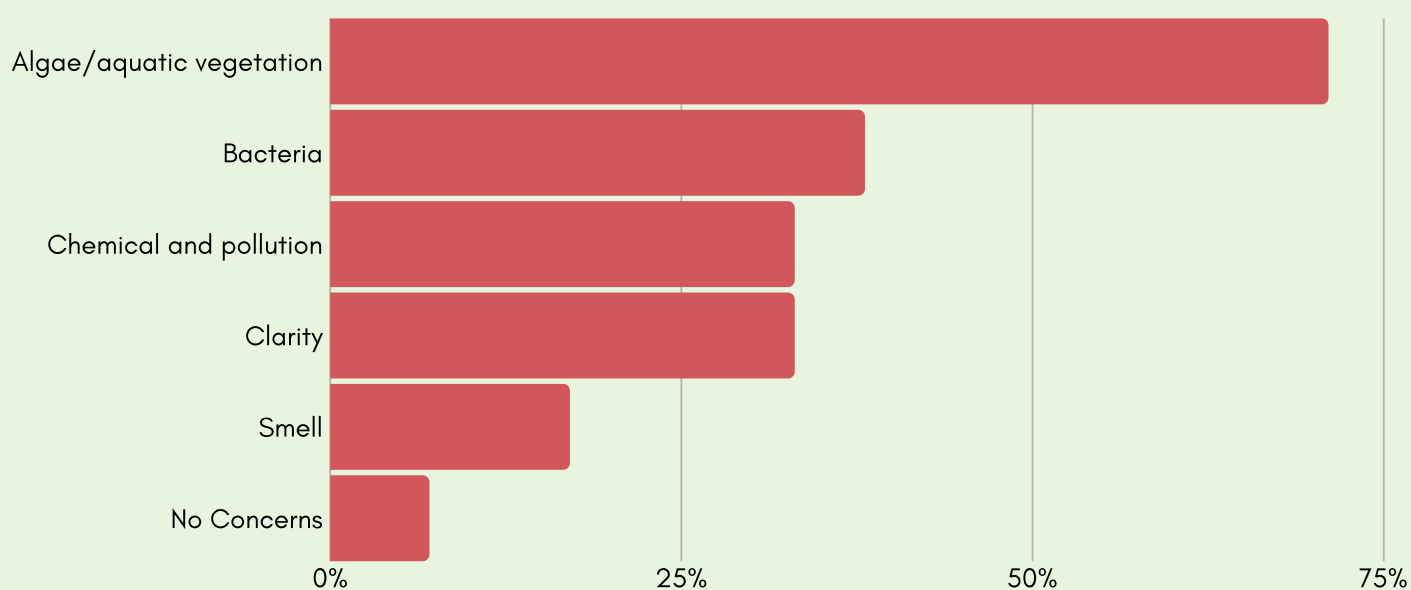


PERCEIVED CONCERNS

The top concerns expressed about water quality were Algae/aquatic vegetation, Bacteria, and Chemical contamination and pollution. Figure 5 summarizes the percentage of responses identifying each water quality concern.

FIGURE 5.

Percentage attributed to top water quality concerns, as identified by 2,617 shoreline property owners participating in Love Your Lake (2013-2019).



INTEREST IN STEWARDSHIP INFORMATION AND ACTIVITIES

Of the 2,617 survey respondents, 2,022 (77%) said they were interested to learn more about their activities and how it affects water quality, wildlife habitat, and the overall health of the lake. This is represented in Figure 6. When asked whether they would be interested in participating in stewardship activities around the lake, 1,003 (38%) responded "yes". This is represented in Figure 7.

FIGURE 6.

Interest of 2,617 respondents in learning more about how individual activities can affect water quality, wildlife habitat, and overall lake health (2013-2019).

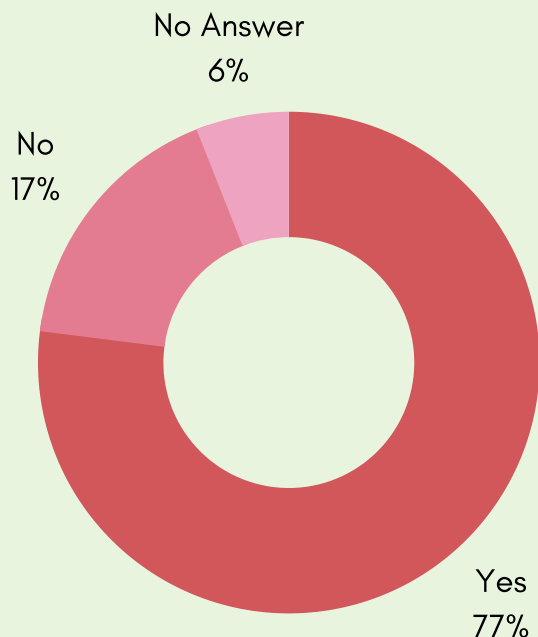
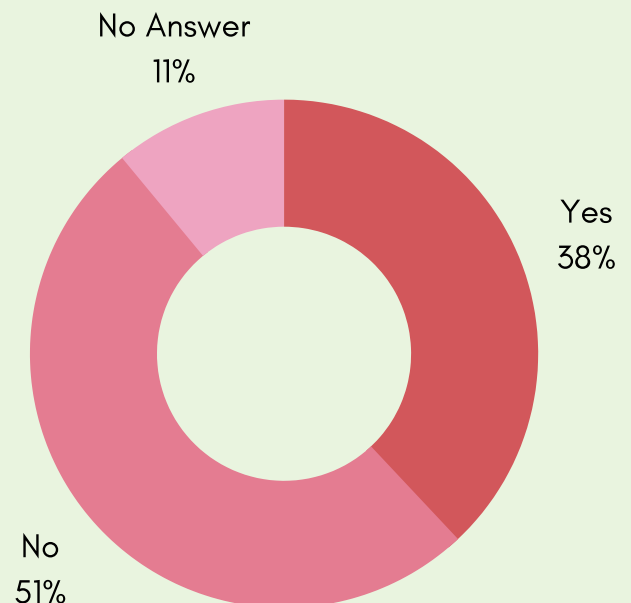


FIGURE 7.

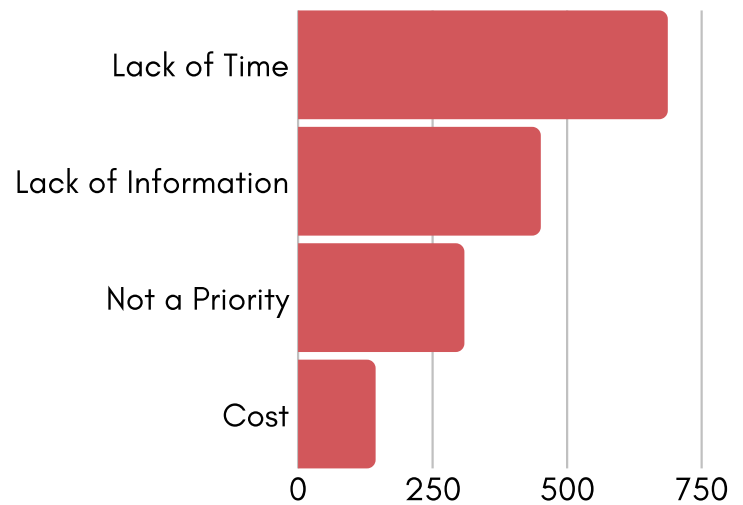
Interest of 2,617 respondents in participating in stewardship projects/activities related to their lake (2013-2019).



BARRIERS TO ACTION

Since 2015, an additional question was added to the value survey: "What barriers have you encountered when trying to participate in stewardship projects?". In total, 1,820 respondents answered this question and their responses are represented in Figure 8.

FIGURE 8.
Barriers to action as identified by 1,820 participants in Love Your Lake (2015-2019).





Watersheds
CANADA



**CANADIAN WILDLIFE
FEDERATION**

www.loveyourlake.ca

Photography: Monica Seidel