

LOVE YOUR LAKE



2013-2021
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 44,274 properties on 187 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 five provinces: British Columbia (2019-2021), Alberta (2016-2018), Saskatchewan (2016-2021), Ontario (2013-2021), and Nova Scotia (2021).



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, over 11,500 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.

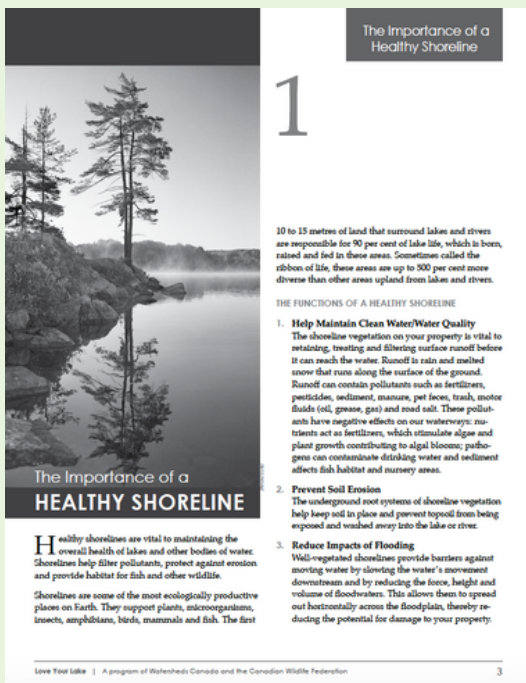


IMAGE 1.

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, 2,757 value surveys have been gathered from 2013-2021 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 2013-2021.

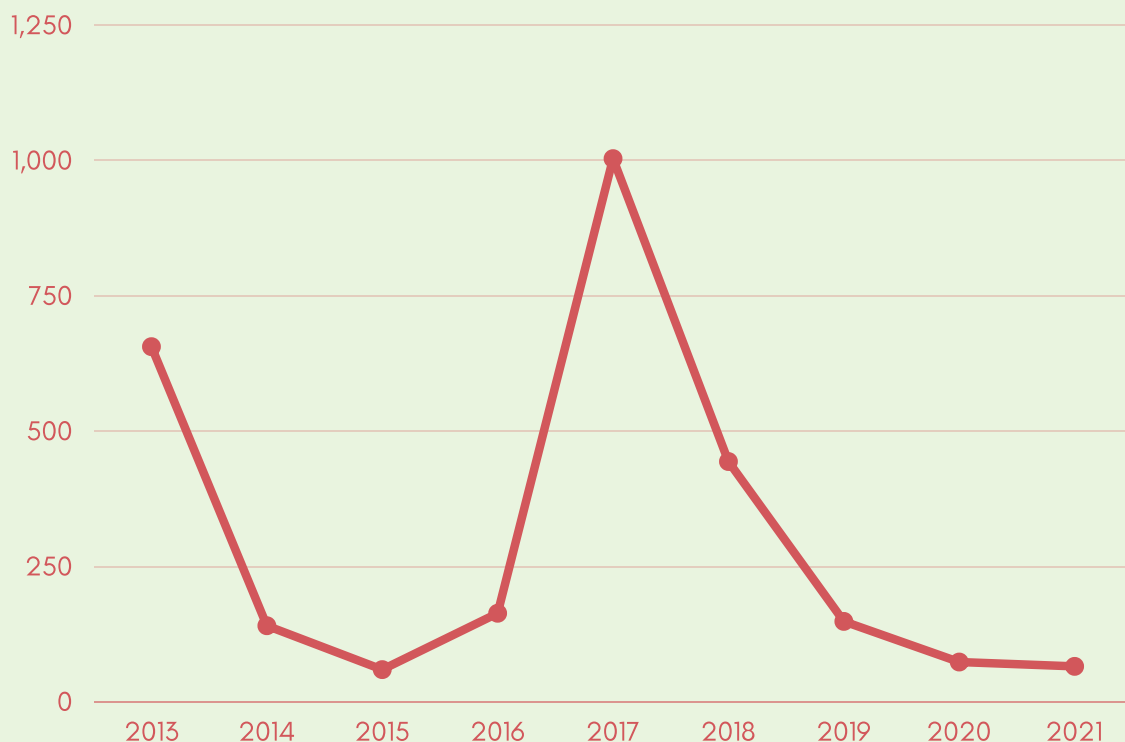


FIGURE 1.

The distribution of total value survey responses for each year the Love Your Lake program has been delivered (2013-2021).

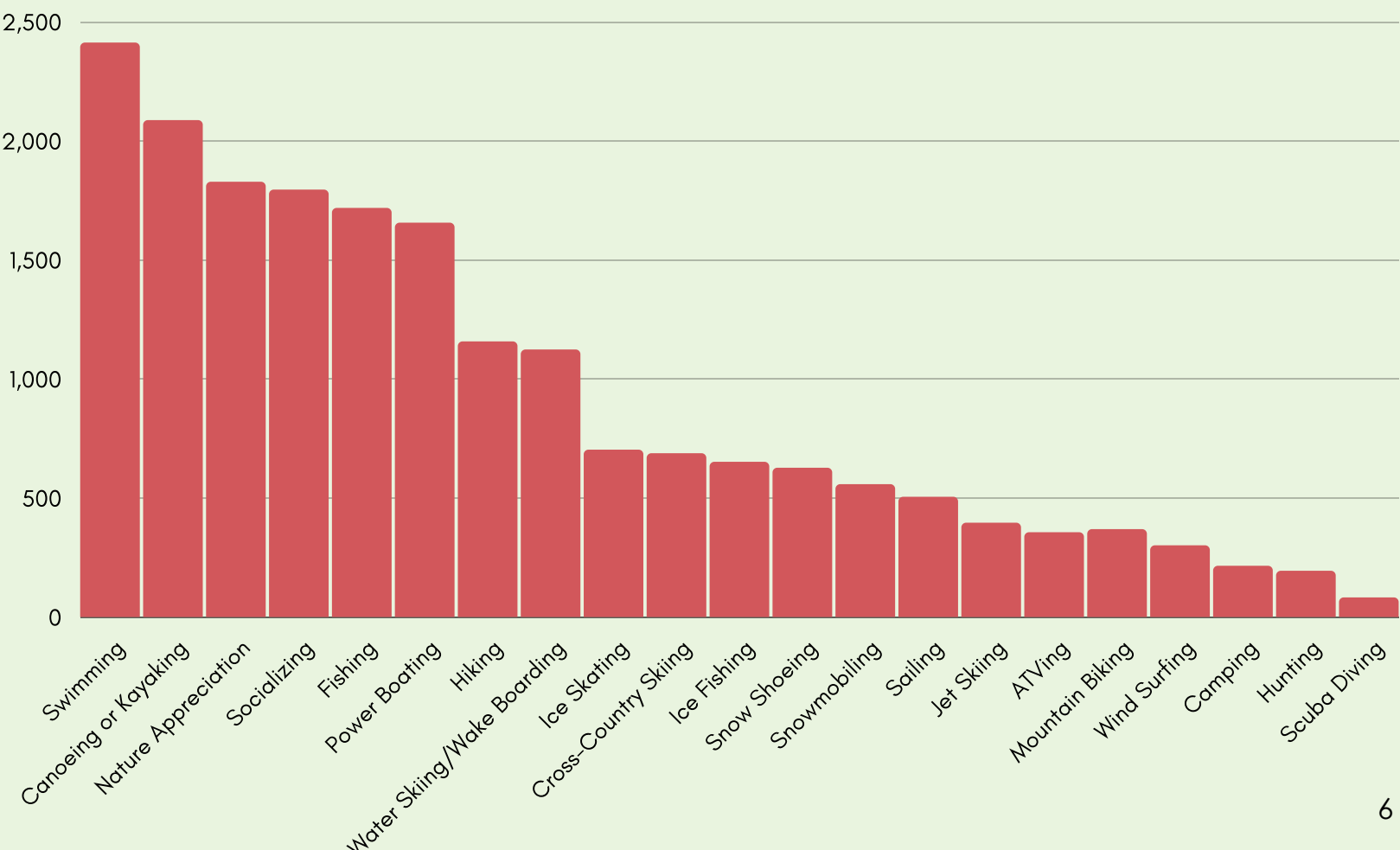
VALUES SURVEY RESULTS

Of the 2,757 respondents to the value surveys, 1,742 (63%) identified as seasonal residents, 850 (31%) identified as permanent residents, 188 (7%) identified as owning vacant property, 46 (2%) identified as operating a business, 38 (1%) identified as operating a farm, and 16 (1%) identified as renting.

Of the 1,742 seasonal residents, 1,149 (66%) said they do not plan to become permanent residents, and 174 (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 2,757 residents participating in the Love Your Lake program (2013-2021).

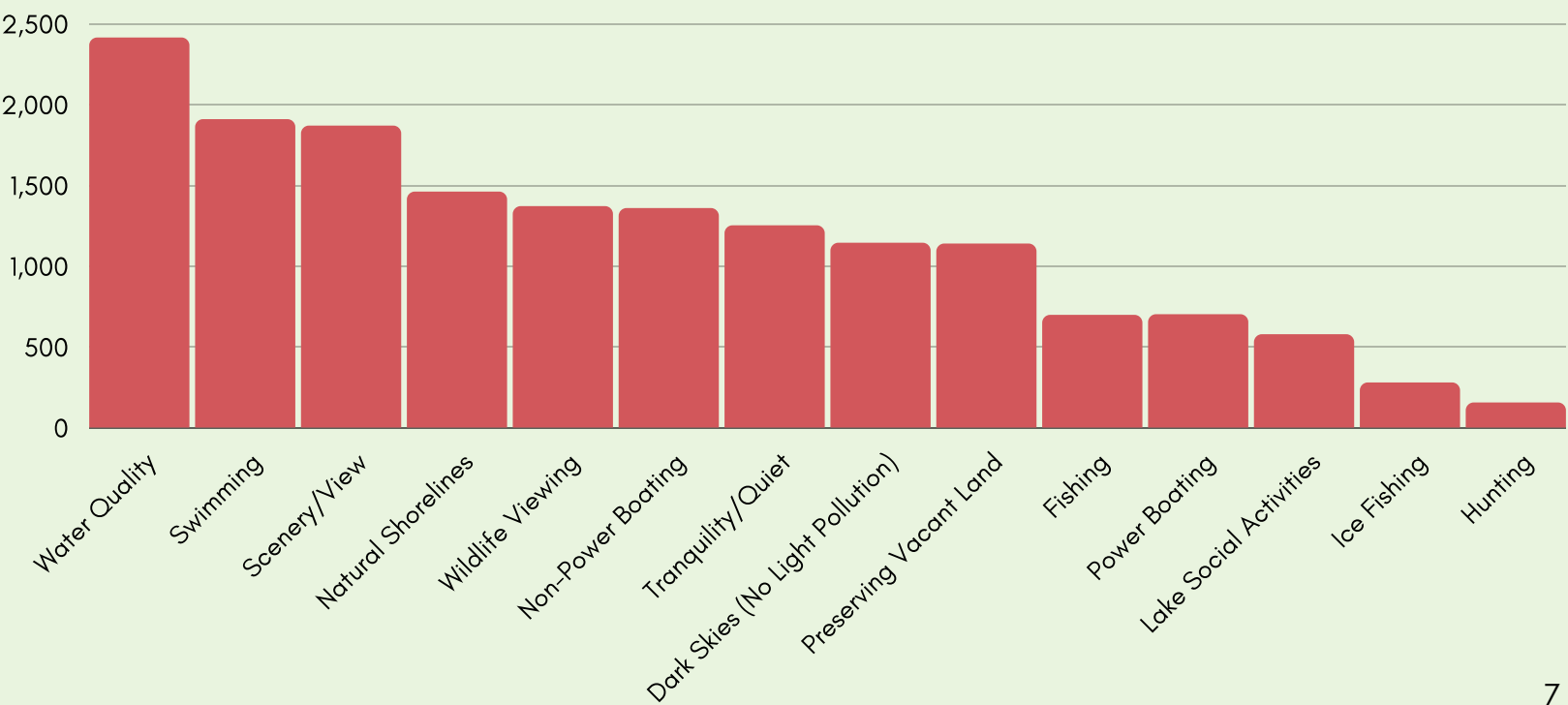




The most important elements, valued for their impact on personal enjoyment of the lake, included Water Quality, Swimming, and Scenery/View. Surveys asked respondents to rate each activity from 1 to 5 with 5 being extremely important and 1 being not important. Figure 3 shows the distribution of "extremely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

FIGURE 3.

Responses for elements affecting personal enjoyment of lakes, as identified by 2,757 shoreline property owners participating in Love Your Lake (2013-2021).



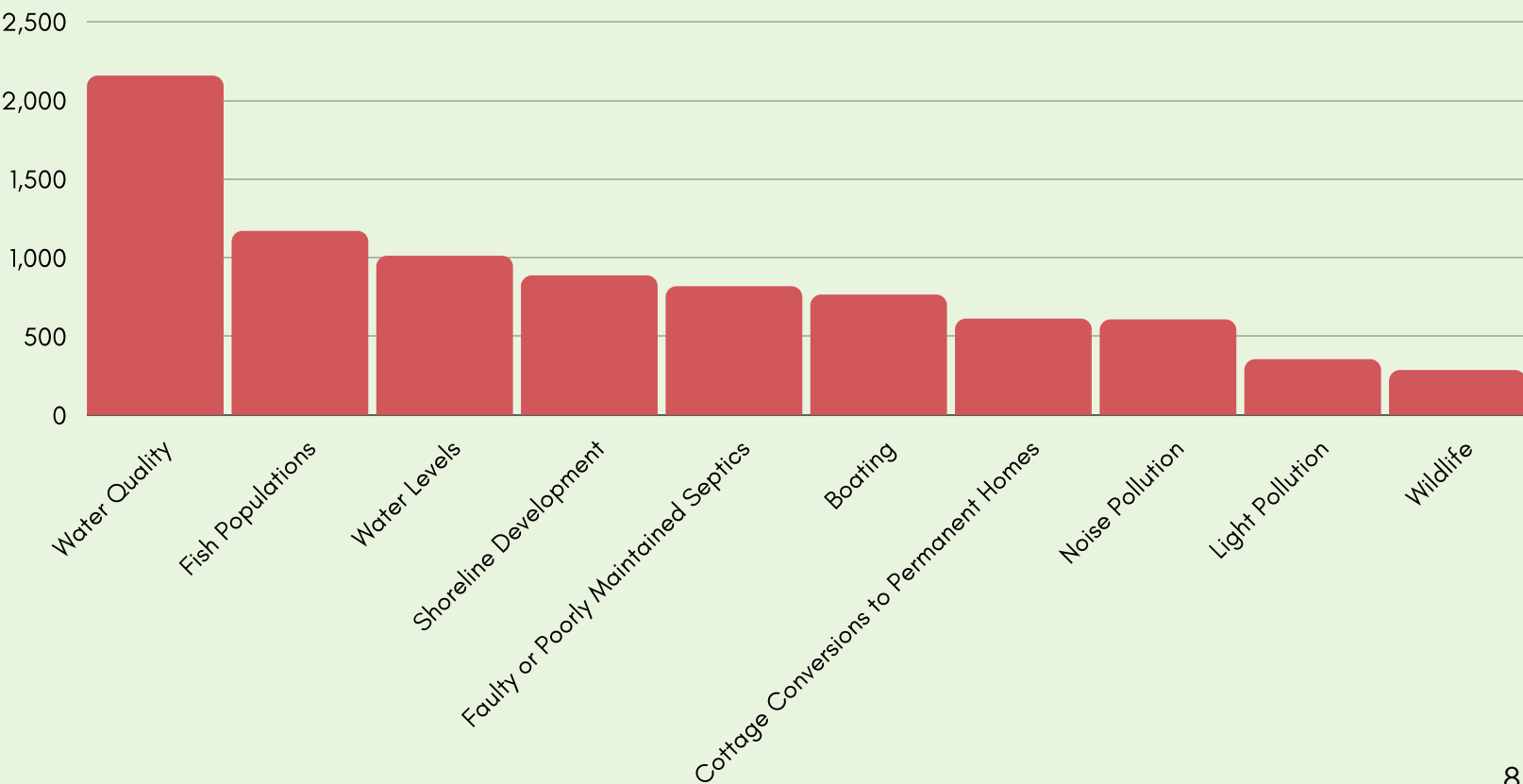
TOP ISSUES

The most frequently identified issue facing Canadian lakes, provided by the 2,757 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 2,757 shoreline property owners participating in Love Your Lake (2013-2021).



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 2,757 shoreline property owners participating in Love Your Lake (2013-2021).

Undertake Actions	# Responses	% of Total	Rank
Create or enforce stricter rules for new development	895	32.4%	1
Undertake a lake management plan	865	31.3%	2
Provide education materials to property owners	844	30.6%	3
Engage in a septic re-inspection program	726	26.3%	4
Limit boat wakes near shore	721	26.1%	4
Plant trees and shrubs along shore	681	24.7%	5
Undertake more water quality testing	615	22.3%	6
Engage more property owners in lake activities	564	20.4%	7
Improve communication between property owners and lake association	517	18.7%	8
Create or enforce stricter rules for cottage conversions	407	14.7%	9
Stop mowing grass by the shoreline	327	11.8%	10
Nothing	63	2.2%	11

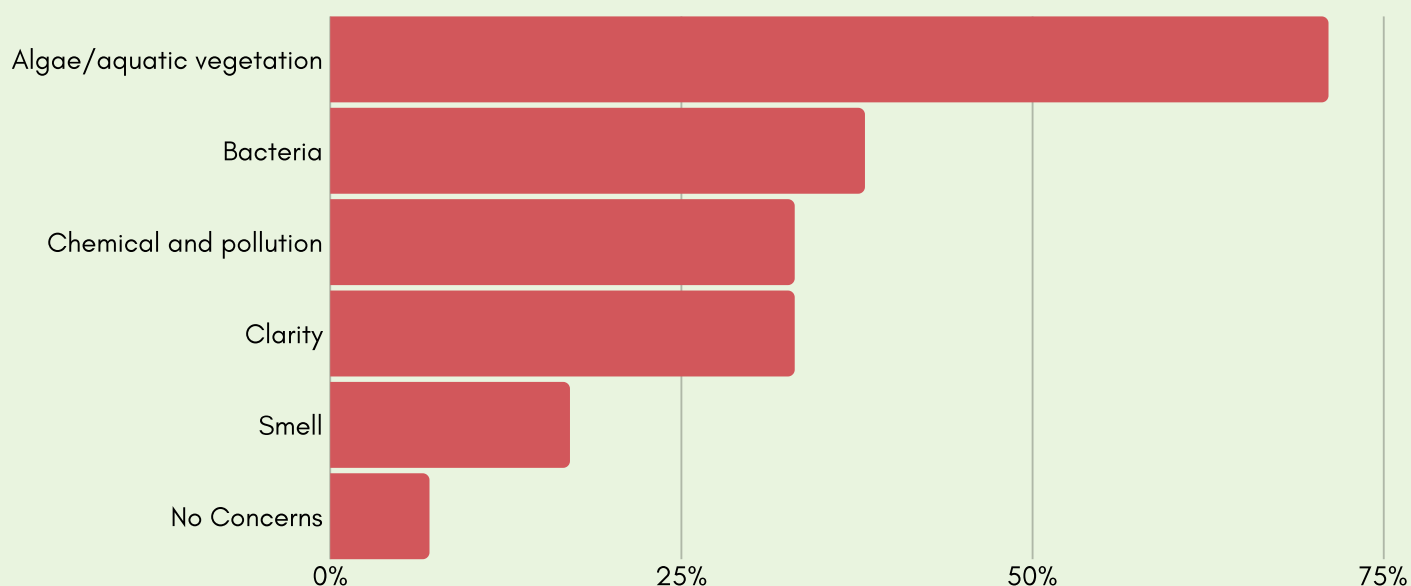


PERCEIVED CONCERNS

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 2,757 shoreline property owners participating in Love Your Lake (2013-2021).



INTEREST IN STEWARDSHIP INFORMATION AND ACTIVITIES

Of the 2,757 survey respondents, 2,146 (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, 1,094 (39.7%) responded "yes". This is represented in Figure 7.

FIGURE 6.

Interest of 2,757 respondents in learning more about how individual activities can affect water quality, wildlife habitat, and overall lake health (2013-2021).

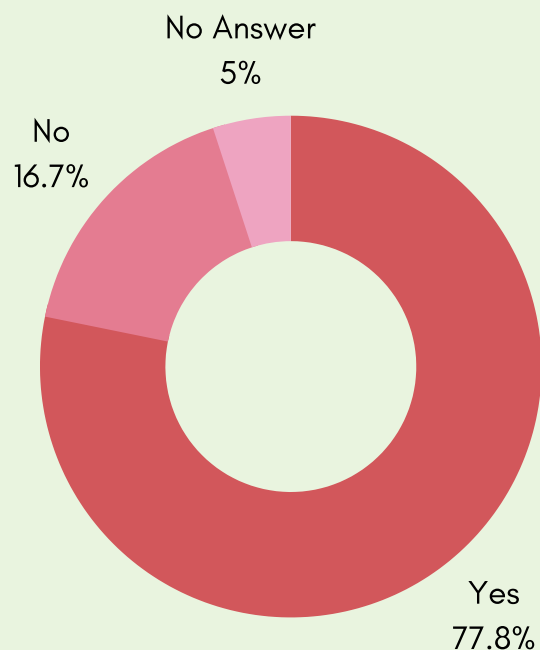
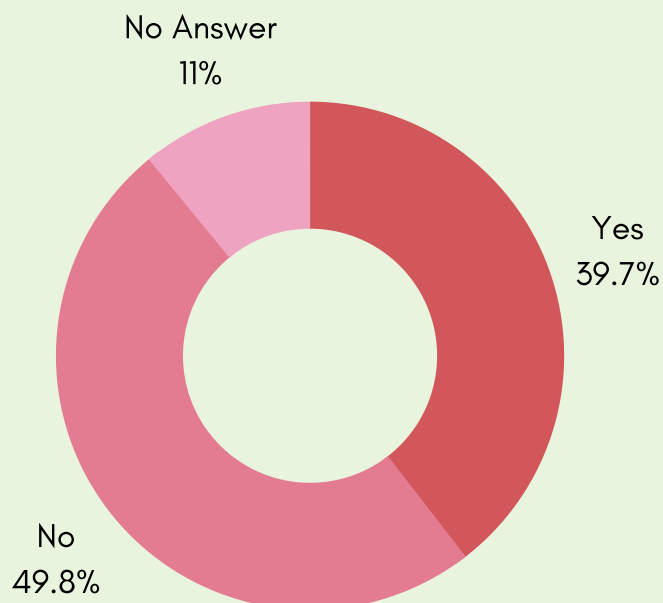


FIGURE 7.

Interest of 2,757 respondents in participating in stewardship projects/activities related to their lake (2013-2021).

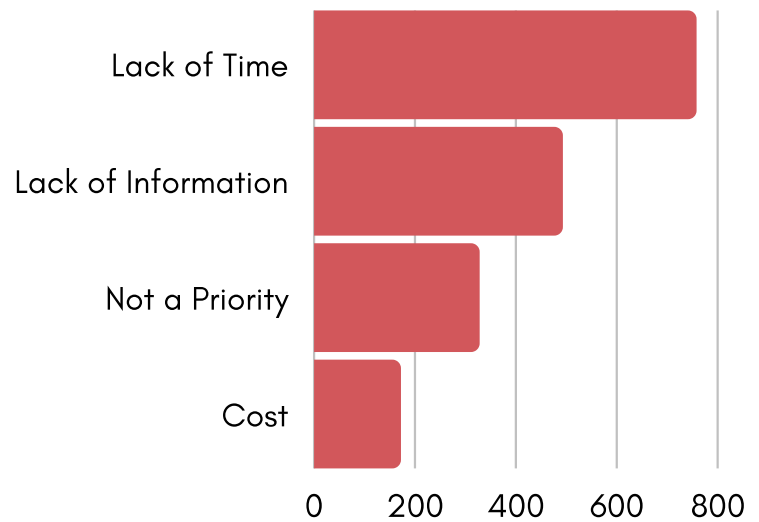


BARRIERS TO ACTION

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, 1,937 respondents answered this question and their responses are represented in Figure 8.

FIGURE 8.

Barriers to action as identified by 1,937 participants in Love Your Lake (2015-2021).





Watersheds
CANADA



**CANADIAN WILDLIFE
FEDERATION**

www.loveyourlake.ca

Photography: Monica Seidel