

# OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY PUBLIC SURVEY RESULTS – 2023



Prepared by:



#101, 9 Chippewa Road  
Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada T8A 6J7

December 2023

**OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY  
PUBLIC SURVEY RESULTS – 2023**

**Authored by:**

Todd Zimmerling, M.Sc., PhD, P.Biol.



**Reviewed by:**

Ken Kranrod, M.Sc., P.Biol.



## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Since 2008, Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) has commissioned a phone survey of Albertans aged 18+ to determine recognition of ACA and its member groups, as well as Albertans' support for and participation in a variety of outdoor recreational activities. This survey is commissioned every three years (2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2020 and 2023) to provide trend data related to ACA activities. This report provides the results of the 2023 public survey.

Recognition of active conservation groups in Alberta was found to be low, with 49% of Albertans unable to name any active conservation organizations in the province.

Catch-and-release fishing, and catch-and-keep fishing, maintained a high level of support amongst Albertans (87% and 82%, respectively). In addition, over two-thirds of Albertans supported game bird hunting (67%) and 58% supported big game hunting, while trapping continued to see an increasing trend in support with 54%.

Licensed hunters make up approximately 5% of Albertans aged 18+, yet the 2023 survey results show a much higher participation rate in hunting (6% for urban respondents and 20% for rural respondents). A similar phenomenon was seen with fishing, where 9% participation would be expected based on licence sales; however, 22% of urban respondents and 38% of rural respondents indicated they had participated in fishing in the previous 12 months. This discrepancy between licence numbers and indicated participation rates has been seen in the previous surveys as well.

We speculate that many people are self-associating as “participating” in hunting or fishing when they have accompanied a hunter or angler or perhaps participated in processing wild game or fish. This self-association with hunting and fishing is an outcome that may indicate people do not have to be fully engaged in the activity to feel they are part of the activity. It also may indicate that hunting and fishing as activities are enjoyed by a much larger percentage of the population than would be expected by licence sales alone. This self-association with hunting may be further promoted by the fact that 41% of Albertans indicate they have eaten hunter-harvested game meat in the past 12 months. This result can be thought of as every licenced hunter providing at least one meal to seven additional adults in the province.

The survey found that of those people who said they have not participated in hunting or fishing in the last 12 months, 42% have participated in hunting and 82% have participated in fishing at some time in their life. “Lack of time” and “lost interest” were identified as the most frequent reasons for non-participation; whereas “cost” and “not knowing where to go” contributed little to the decision not to participate in the last 12 months.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In June 2008, Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) initiated a public survey to determine Albertans' recognition of ACA and its member groups, as well as Albertans' support for, and participation in various outdoor recreational activities. ACA commissions a similar survey every three years (2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2020, and 2023) to provide trend data related to ACA activities. In June 2023, ACA contracted Trend Research Inc. to continue the public surveys and provide the sixth data set in this series.

ACA uses the results of this survey to help direct programming, public education, and marketing activities. Though a variety of recreational activities, including birdwatching and off-highway vehicle use, were covered in the survey, ACA found the most value in the responses regarding hunting, fishing, and trapping, and thus more detail regarding these responses has been provided in the analysis and discussion sections. The tabular results are provided for all questions to allow readers to run a more detailed analysis on questions where this report has not.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Between June 5 and 19, 2023, a total of 1,200 telephone interviews were completed with randomly selected Albertans aged 18+ by Trend Research Inc. The telephone surveys were split geographically into 300 in the Urban North (Edmonton Census Metropolitan Area [CMA] as defined by Statistics Canada), 300 in the Urban South (Calgary CMA, as defined by Statistics Canada), 300 Rural North (north of Highway 16 excluding Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray) and 300 Rural South (south of Highway 16, excluding Red Deer, Lethbridge, and Medicine Hat). Within each geographic area, 150 women and 150 men were surveyed.

Trend Research Inc. purchased a random, representative sample of phone numbers for the survey, and included cell phone numbers as 60% of the sample. All interviews were conducted from Trend Research's Edmonton call centre. All interviews were supervised and monitored, and the survey was registered with the Marketing Research & Intelligence Association (MRIA) to ensure best practices were being adhered to.

All interviewers were trained on the specific survey questions and a pretest of 30 interviews was conducted prior to commencing the full survey.

### **Statistical Reliability**

Overall results, at a sample size of 1,200, are accurate to within  $\pm 2.8$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20 (Canadian Advertising Research Foundation, Media Research Standards Procedures, 1984).

Regional results, at a sample size of 300 in each Urban North (Edmonton CMA), Urban South (Calgary CMA), northern rural Alberta, and southern rural Alberta, are accurate to within  $\pm 5.7$

percentage points, 19 times out of 20 (Canadian Advertising Research Foundation, Media Research Standards Procedures, 1984).

Sex-biased results, at a sample size of 150 are accurate to within  $\pm 8.0$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20 (Canadian Advertising Research Foundation, Media Research Standards Procedures, 1984).

## **RESULTS**

Although these results are considered statistically valid within the limits identified in the methods section, caution should be used when looking at the results of “respondents” that combine rural and urban respondents. These respondent results are comparable to respondent results on previous surveys; however, combining rural and urban together to produce an “Alberta” result can only be done if the urban and rural results are weighted to represent the relative percentage of Albertans 18+ years living in the rural versus urban areas (roughly 22:78, based on 2021 Statistics Canada census data). Weighting of the results is identified in the results section when a “weighted response” is identified.

### **Question 1. Please name as many active conservation organizations as you can, that operate in Alberta.**

	<b>Rural North Male</b>	<b>Rural North Female</b>	<b>Urban North Male</b>	<b>Urban North Female</b>	<b>Rural South Male</b>	<b>Rural South Female</b>	<b>Urban South Male</b>	<b>Urban South Female</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
	<b>n=150</b>	<b>n=150</b>	<b>n=150</b>	<b>n=150</b>	<b>n=150</b>	<b>n=150</b>	<b>n=150</b>	<b>n=150</b>	<b>n=1200</b>	
ABA	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	4	0.3
ACA	9	7	4	2	7	5	3	2	39	3.3
AFGA	16	6	7	4	17	11	3	2	66	5.5
AHEIA	3	0	3	2	1	2	1	1	13	1.1
APOS	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	4	0.3
ATA	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	2	5	0.4
DUC	47	52	37	30	50	58	61	29	364	30.3
HFT	0	0	1	4	0	2	0	1	8	0.7
NA	1	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	6	0.5
NCC	2	4	5	6	10	11	6	7	51	4.3
PF	3	0	2	0	2	2	1	2	12	1.0
TUC	3	1	3	2	2	2	7	4	24	2.0
WEF	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	0.3
WSFA	1	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	5	0.4
WWF	5	4	14	8	4	3	15	9	62	5.2
WWS	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	4	0.3
Other	29	20	20	21	33	35	33	35	226	18.8
Could Name No Group	71	64	75	89	60	62	64	78	563	46.9

(ABA – Alberta Bowhunters Association, ACA – Alberta Conservation Association, AFGA – Alberta Fish and Game Association, AHEIA – Alberta Hunter Education Instructors’ Association, APOS – Alberta Professional Outfitters Society, ATA – Alberta Trappers’ Association, DUC – Ducks Unlimited Canada, HFT – Hunting For Tomorrow, NA – Nature Alberta, NCC – Nature Conservancy Canada, PF – Pheasants Forever, TUC – Trout Unlimited Canada, WEF – Wild Elk Federation, WSFA – Wild Sheep Foundation, Alberta, WWF – World Wildlife Fund, WWS - Willmore Wilderness Society)

RESULTS: Unaided (no mention of name) recognition for ACA was 3.3% of respondents, which compares to 5.3% in 2020, 3.8% in 2017, 2.3% in 2014, 2% in 2011 and 2% in 2008. Weighted responses show 2.5% of Albertans identified ACA and 49% could not name an active conservation group in Alberta.

**Question 2. Have you heard of the following conservation groups? (group was mentioned if not identified in Question 1)**

	Rural North Male	Rural North Female	Urban North Male	Urban North Female	Rural South Male	Rural South Female	Urban South Male	Urban South Female	Total Q. 2	Total Q.1	% Total 1+2
											n=1200
ABA	58	67	35	26	55	62	38	30	371	4	31.3
ACA	69	79	55	67	71	64	60	56	521	39	46.7
AFGA	128	138	113	125	123	130	114	119	990	66	87.5
AHEIA	82	90	45	24	75	86	45	33	480	13	41.0
APOS	78	59	30	36	62	50	44	32	391	4	32.9
ATA	112	103	38	36	69	53	32	24	476	5	39.3
DUC	100	91	74	99	97	91	73	103	728	364	91.0
HFT	15	10	10	3	18	12	7	7	82	8	7.5
NA	19	30	26	28	29	37	23	17	209	6	17.9
NCC	55	53	51	44	61	72	74	72	482	51	44.4
PF	13	10	3	2	25	12	6	4	75	12	6.4
TUC	34	29	36	28	67	49	73	65	381	24	33.8
WSFA	38	28	13	10	32	20	15	7	163	5	14.0

RESULTS: Total recognition of ACA (unaided plus aided) was 47% of respondents compared to 56% in 2020, 50% in 2017, 56% in 2014, 59% in 2011 and 41% in 2008. Weighted responses showed 44% of Albertans have heard of ACA.

**Question 3. Using a one to seven scale where one means DO NOT SUPPORT AT ALL, four means SUPPORT, and seven means COMPLETELY SUPPORT, rate your level of support for the following activities.**

**Question 3A. Catch-and-release fishing**

	Rural North Male	Rural North Female	Urban North Male	Urban North Female	Rural South Male	Rural South Female	Urban South Male	Urban South Female	Total	%
	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	1200	
1 Do not support at all	21	13	4	10	11	7	7	14	87	7.3
2	8	8	3	2	2	4	1	5	33	2.8
3	7	5	7	8	4	4	3	6	44	3.7
<b>4 Support</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>162</b>	13.5
5	29	26	20	19	23	14	15	19	165	13.8
6	14	19	21	27	25	24	29	33	192	16.0
7 Completely support	51	53	83	66	64	71	70	59	517	43.1

RESULTS: 86% of respondents “support” (4,5,6,7) catch-and-release fishing compared to 87% in 2020, 82% in 2017, 83% in 2014, 82% in 2011, and 82% in 2008. Both urban and rural respondents had similar responses (88% vs 84%). When the urban and rural are combined, the weighted response is 87% “support” from Albertans.

**Question 3B. Catch-and-keep fishing**

	Rural North Male	Rural North Female	Urban North Male	Urban North Female	Rural South Male	Rural South Female	Urban South Male	Urban South Female	Total	%
	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	1200	
1 Do not support at all	9	11	3	9	9	6	14	17	78	6.5
2	6	5	2	1	9	3	8	7	41	3.4
3	11	5	10	14	8	6	15	14	83	6.9
<b>4 Support</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>268</b>	22.3
5	27	25	36	28	28	28	20	29	221	18.4
6	20	19	23	18	27	22	21	16	166	13.8
7 Completely support	54	54	41	39	46	46	35	28	343	28.6

RESULTS: 83% of respondents “support” (4,5,6,7) catch-and-keep fishing compared to 83% in 2020, 76% in 2017, 76% in 2014, 70% in 2011 and 66% in 2008. When broken down into urban versus rural, 81% of urban respondents indicated “support” compared to 85% of rural respondents. When the urban and rural are combined, the weighted response is 82% “support” from Albertans.



### Question 3C. Birdwatching

	Rural North Male	Rural North Female	Urban North Male	Urban North Female	Rural South Male	Rural South Female	Urban South Male	Urban South Female	Total	%
	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	1200	
1 Do not support at all	13	5	5	3	11	2	5	8	52	4.3
2	1	1	1	2	2	3	0	0	10	0.8
3	4	0	3	0	2	0	2	1	12	1.0
<b>4 Support</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>6.7</b>
5	8	13	12	5	10	7	8	8	71	5.9
6	19	14	15	11	14	8	18	9	108	9.0
7 Completely support	87	110	108	125	94	119	108	116	867	72.3

RESULTS: 94% of respondents “support” (4,5,6,7) birdwatching compared to 94% in 2020, 90% in 2017, 88% in 2014, 86% in 2011 and 90% in 2008. When broken down into urban versus rural, 95% of urban respondents indicated “support” compared to 93% of rural respondents. When the urban and rural are combined, the weighted response is 95% “support” from Albertans.

### Question 3D. Trapping

	Rural North Male	Rural North Female	Urban North Male	Urban North Female	Rural South Male	Rural South Female	Urban South Male	Urban South Female	Total	%
	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	1200	
1 Do not support at all	22	27	28	45	21	31	36	53	263	21.9
2	2	6	13	20	7	4	18	15	85	7.1
3	11	10	16	18	11	17	18	23	124	10.3
<b>4 Support</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>18.3</b>
5	20	21	24	20	27	34	21	11	178	14.8
6	20	19	11	7	17	17	9	7	107	8.9
7 Completely support	54	38	25	14	41	24	17	11	224	18.7

RESULTS: 61% of respondents “support” (4,5,6,7) trapping compared to 59% in 2020, 52% in 2017, 50% in 2014, 42% in 2011 and 41% in 2008. When broken down into urban versus rural, 50% of urban respondents indicated “support” compared to 72% of rural respondents. When the urban and rural are combined, the weighted response is 54% “support” from Albertans.

### Question 3E. Game bird hunting

	Rural North Male	Rural North Female	Urban North Male	Urban North Female	Rural South Male	Rural South Female	Urban South Male	Urban South Female	Total	%
	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	1200	
1 Do not support at all	14	16	12	33	8	10	21	32	146	12.2
2	2	5	11	16	7	4	14	10	69	5.8
3	7	12	13	21	9	9	17	23	111	9.3
<b>4 Support</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>22.6</b>
5	25	22	26	21	19	22	22	12	169	14.1
6	21	17	24	9	27	24	15	11	148	12.3
7 Completely support	49	42	34	18	53	42	26	22	286	23.8

RESULTS: 73% of respondents “support” (4,5,6,7) game bird hunting compared to 68% in 2020, 59% in 2017 and 2014, 52% in 2011 and 50% in 2008. When broken down into urban versus rural, 63% of urban respondents indicated “support” compared to 83% of rural respondents. When the urban and rural are combined, the weighted response is 67% “support” from Albertans.

### Question 3F. Big game hunting

	Rural North Male	Rural North Female	Urban North Male	Urban North Female	Rural South Male	Rural South Female	Urban South Male	Urban South Female	Total	%
	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	1200	
1 Do not support at all	16	23	21	45	14	17	35	50	221	18.4
2	3	7	7	13	9	5	11	18	73	6.1
3	5	7	15	12	5	9	14	15	82	6.8
<b>4 Support</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>16.5</b>
5	23	15	28	15	20	30	20	13	164	13.7
6	14	16	15	12	16	21	19	12	125	10.4
7 Completely support	72	53	34	24	64	47	26	17	337	28.1

RESULTS: 69% of all respondents “support” (4,5,6,7) big game hunting compared to 63% in 2020, 59% in 2017 and 2014, 50% in 2011 and 47% in 2008. When broken down into urban versus rural, 52% of urban respondents indicated “support” compared to 75% of rural respondents. When the urban and rural are combined, the weighted response is 58% “support” from Albertans.

**Question 3G. Off-highway vehicle use**

	Rural North Male	Rural North Female	Urban North Male	Urban North Female	Rural South Male	Rural South Female	Urban South Male	Urban South Female	Total	%
	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	1200	
1 Do not support at all	20	28	25	34	21	24	28	46	226	18.8
2	8	13	16	15	15	12	22	23	124	10.3
3	12	9	22	27	13	19	18	17	137	11.4
<b>4 Support</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>20.6</b>
5	17	24	21	20	23	25	14	10	154	12.8
6	16	17	10	6	19	16	16	8	108	9.0
7 Completely support	46	26	30	18	30	23	19	12	204	17.0

RESULTS: 59% of respondents “support” (4,5,6,7) off-highway vehicle use compared to 61% in 2020, 60% in 2017, 53% in 2014, 49% in 2011 and 40% in 2008. When broken down into urban versus rural, 51% of urban respondents indicated “support” compared to 68% of rural respondents. When the urban and rural are combined, the weighted response is 55% “support” from Albertans.

**Question 4. With respect to wildlife conservation, which of the following do you believe is the biggest issue in Alberta at this time?**

	Rural North Male	Rural North Female	Urban North Male	Urban North Female	Rural South Male	Rural South Female	Urban South Male	Urban South Female	Total	%
	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	1200	
Loss of native wildlife habitat	64	67	75	83	68	82	90	97	626	52.2
Lack of wildlife research	17	20	14	15	20	14	18	5	123	10.3
Over hunting	21	14	13	17	7	7	10	14	103	8.6
Wildlife diseases	28	34	30	25	44	36	26	22	245	20.4
Don't know	20	15	18	10	11	11	6	12	103	8.6

RESULTS: 52% of respondents ranked loss of native wildlife habitat as the biggest issue compared to 52% in 2020, 52% in 2017, 56% in 2014, 60% in 2011 and 59% in 2008. Wildlife disease was the second most popular answer with 20% compared to 19% in 2020, 17% in 2017, 14% in 2014, 11% in 2011 and 16% in 2008.

**Question 5. With respect to fish conservation, which of the following do you believe is the biggest issue in Alberta at this time?**

	Rural North Male	Rural North Female	Urban North Male	Urban North Female	Rural South Male	Rural South Female	Urban South Male	Urban South Female	Total	%
	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	1200	
Reduced stream flows due to over allocation	17	25	16	19	35	31	41	36	220	18.3
Lack of fisheries research	22	15	13	11	20	19	9	5	114	9.5
Overfishing	26	19	17	8	21	14	14	15	134	11.2
Pollution of lakes and rivers	70	75	89	108	60	74	70	83	629	52.4
Don't know	15	16	15	4	14	12	16	11	103	8.6

RESULTS: 52% of respondents ranked pollution of lakes and rivers as the biggest issue compared to 57% in 2020, 61% in 2017, 64% in 2014, 56% in 2011 and 65% in 2008. Reduced streamflow due to over allocation showed an increase from 12.8% in 2020 to 18.3% in 2023. The disparity between respondents from the north vs the south was large, with 6.4% of northern respondent ranking stream flow as the number one issues compared to 11.9% of southern respondents.

**Question 6. In the last 12 months, have you participated in any of the following outdoor activities in Alberta:**

**Question 6A. Hunting**

	Rural North Male	Rural North Female	Urban North Male	Urban North Female	Rural South Male	Rural South Female	Urban South Male	Urban South Female	Total
	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	1200
Yes	51	23	16	6	30	17	10	3	156
%	34.0	15.3	10.7	4.0	20.0	11.3	6.7	2.0	13.0

RESULTS: 13% of respondents indicated they had participated in hunting in the last 12 months, compared to 13% in 2020, 15% on 2017, 13% in 2014, 13% in 2011 and 9% in 2008. Participation rates in hunting varied between 6% for urban respondents and 20% for rural respondents. The overall weighted response shows 9% participation from Albertans overall. These participation rates are consistent with results from previous years' surveys.

**Question 6B. Fishing**

	Rural North Male	Rural North Female	Urban North Male	Urban North Female	Rural South Male	Rural South Female	Urban South Male	Urban South Female	Total
	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	1200
Yes	71	45	42	27	62	52	35	26	360
%	47.3	30.0	28.0	18.0	41.3	34.6	23.3	17.3	30.0

RESULTS: 30% of respondents indicated they had participated in fishing in the last 12 months, compared to 27% in 2020, 34% in 2017 and 2014, 33% in 2011 and 26% in 2008. Participation rates of females living in the south (rural and urban combined) increased from 13.6% in 2020 to 26% in 2023. When respondents’ participation rate is split between urban and rural, there is 22% participation for urban respondents and 38% for rural respondents. The overall weighted response shows 25% participation from Albertans overall.

**Question 6C. Birdwatching.**

	Rural North Male	Rural North Female	Urban North Male	Urban North Female	Rural South Male	Rural South Female	Urban South Male	Urban South Female	Total
	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	1200
Yes	86	101	68	72	80	100	73	77	657
%	57.3	67.3	45.3	48.0	53.0	66.7	48.7	51.3	54.8

RESULTS: 55% of respondents indicated they had participated in birdwatching in the last 12 months, compared to 48% in 2020, 50% in 2017, 57% in 2014, 47% in 2011 and 42% in 2008. Weighting the urban and rural responses gives 51% participation from Albertans overall.

**Question 6D. Trapping**

	Rural North Male	Rural North Female	Urban North Male	Urban North Female	Rural South Male	Rural South Female	Urban South Male	Urban South Female	Total
	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	1200
Yes	11	4	1	8	5	1	1	1	32
%	7.3	2.7	0.7	5.3	3.3	0.7	0.7	0.7	2.7

RESULTS: 3% of respondents indicated they had participated in trapping in the last 12 months, compared to 3% in 2020, 3% in 2017, 2% in 2014, 1% in 2011 and 2% in 2008. Weighting the urban and rural responses gives 2% participation from Albertans overall.

**Question 7A. Have you participated in hunting at any time in the past? (If answered NO to 6A, “Have you participated in hunting in the last 12 months?”)**

	Rural North Male	Rural North Female	Urban North Male	Urban North Female	Rural South Male	Rural South Female	Urban South Male	Urban South Female	Total	%
	n=99	n=127	n=134	n=144	n=120	n=133	n=140	n=147	1044	
<b>Yes</b>	67	46	57	35	72	53	66	25	421	40.3
<b>No</b>	32	81	77	109	48	80	74	122	623	59.7

RESULTS: Of those who said they have not participated in hunting in the last 12 months, 40% of respondents indicated they had participated in hunting at some time in the past, compared to 34% in 2020, 28% in 2017, 24% in 2014, 22% in 2011 and 22% in 2008. The results of 6A and 7A combined show a weighted response that 42% of Albertans have participated in hunting at some time in their lives.

**Question 7B. What are some of the reasons you have not participated in hunting in the past 12 months? (asked 421 “yes” respondents from Question 7A)**

	Rural North Male	Rural North Female	Urban North Male	Urban North Female	Rural South Male	Rural South Female	Urban South Male	Urban South Female	Total	% (n=421)
Lack of time	16	7	13	4	23	14	15	2	94	22.3
Cost	6	1	3	1	2	2	4	1	20	4.7
Reduced harvest opportunities	2	2	3	2	1	3	5	3	21	5.0
Don't know where to go	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	3	0.7
Regulations	9	3	8	2	6	3	2	1	34	8.1
Lost interest	22	14	23	17	23	12	33	10	154	36.6
Age (e.g., too old)	10	11	10	2	6	7	9	3	58	13.9
Health	8	7	2	4	8	8	3	2	42	10.0
Other	11	8	6	11	11	14	11	4	76	18.1

RESULTS: Many respondents provided multiple reasons. “Lost interest,” “Lack of time,” and “Other” were the top three reasons; however, many of the “Other” category responses could also have been placed in “Lost interest” and “Lack of time” categories. “Don’t know where to go” “Cost,” and “Reduced harvest opportunities” were not significant factors contributing to why individuals who had hunted previously, had not hunted within the past 12 months.

**Question 8A. Have you participated in fishing at any time in the past? (If answered NO to 6B, “Have you participated in fishing in the past 12 months?)**

	Rural North Male	Rural North Female	Urban North Male	Urban North Female	Rural South Male	Rural South Female	Urban South Male	Urban South Female	Total	%
	n=79	n=105	n=108	n=123	n=88	n=98	n=115	n=124	840	
<b>Yes</b>	71	87	92	95	78	84	90	91	688	81.9
<b>No</b>	8	18	16	28	10	14	25	33	152	18.1

RESULTS: 82% of respondents who have not fished in the past 12 months indicated they had participated in fishing at some time in the past, compared to 77% in 2020, 71% in 2017, 75% in 2014, 64% in 2011 and 63% in 2008. The results of 6B and 8A combined show a weighted response that 82% of Albertans have participated in fishing at some time.

**Question 8B. What are some of the reasons you have not participated in fishing in the past 12 months? (asked 688 “yes” respondents from questions 8A)**

	Rural North Male	Rural North Female	Urban North Male	Urban North Female	Rural South Male	Rural South Female	Urban South Male	Urban South Female	Total	%
										n=688
Lack of time	29	18	24	20	26	27	28	19	191	27.8
Cost	11	1	2	5	2	5	3	0	29	4.2
Reduced harvest opportunities	6	7	10	18	4	10	8	11	74	10.8
Don’t know where to go	2	1	5	5	2	2	6	1	23	3.3
Regulations	5	8	3	0	6	2	3	0	27	3.9
Lost interest	19	37	35	35	27	23	40	42	258	37.5
Age (e.g., too old)	5	10	8	2	9	11	1	5	51	7.4
Health	3	12	5	9	4	12	5	10	56	8.1
Other	13	15	21	22	7	13	21	17	108	15.7

RESULTS: Many respondents provided multiple reasons. “Lost interest,” “Lack of time,” and “Other” were the top three reasons; however, many of the “Other” category responses could also have been placed in “Lost interest” and “Lack of time.” “Don’t know where to go,” “Regulations” and “Cost” were not significant factors contributing to why individuals who had fished previously, had not fished within the past 12 months.

**Question 9. In the past 12 months have you eaten game meat harvested through hunting activities?**

	Rural North Male	Rural North Female	Urban North Male	Urban North Female	Rural South Male	Rural South Female	Urban South Male	Urban South Female	Total
	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	1200
<b>Yes</b>	90	94	65	46	83	84	58	51	571
<b>%</b>	60.0	62.7	43.3	30.7	55.3	56.0	38.7	34.0	47.6

RESULTS: Although only 13% of respondents indicated they had participated in hunting in the last 12 months (Q. 6A), 48% indicate they have eaten game meat harvested through hunting. Even in the Urban South female category where respondents indicated 2% participation in hunting in the last 12 months, 34% indicate they have eaten game meat. The weighted response indicates 41% of Albertans have eaten hunter-harvested game meat in the last 12 months, up from 37% in 2020.

**Question 10. Please provide your age range.**

	Rural North Male	Rural North Female	Urban North Male	Urban North Female	Rural South Male	Rural South Female	Urban South Male	Urban South Female	Total	%
	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150	n=150		
<b>18-25</b>	3	4	10	9	3	1	4	4	38	3.2
<b>26-35</b>	10	3	21	12	9	8	14	9	86	7.2
<b>36-50</b>	21	16	41	38	25	35	33	35	244	20.3
<b>51-64</b>	45	50	40	49	45	41	52	52	374	31.2
<b>65+</b>	71	77	37	42	68	65	47	50	457	38.1
<b>Did not answer</b>	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.08

RESULTS: The age distribution of respondents is skewed toward older ages compared to the Statistics Canada 2021 Census of Population for Alberta. The two oldest age classes being over-represented and the three younger age classes being under-represented.



## **DISCUSSION**

Unaided recognition rate of ACA declined to 3.3% in 2023 compared to 5.3% of respondents in 2020. When looking at the results of Question 1, only one conservation group has an unaided recognition rate over 10% (DUC at 30%) and only three have recognition rates of 5% or higher (AFGA, WWF, and DUC). Almost half (49%) of Albertans (weighted responses) could not name a single active conservation group in Alberta.

When provided prompting, 47% of respondents have heard of ACA, and weighted responses show 44% of Albertans have heard of ACA. DUC had the highest recognition rate from respondents out of all conservation groups, at 91% (Q.2)

Catch-and-release fishing and catch-and-keep fishing both maintain a high level of support amongst Albertans (weighted responses), with catch-and-release fishing seeing 87% support (Q. 3A) and catch-and-keep fishing seeing 82% support (Q. 3B). Based on the limited difference seen between rural and urban respondents, it appears that recreational angling enjoys a high level of acceptance across Alberta.

As a comparison to an inexpensive and easily accessible outdoor activity, participants were asked about support for birdwatching. There was little difference between rural and urban respondents and weighted responses indicate 95% support from Albertans overall.

Support for trapping from respondents shows an increasing trend from 41% in 2008 to 61% in 2023. There is a distinct difference in the level of support shown between urban (50%) and rural (66%) respondents (Q. 3D), with the weighted response showing 54% of Albertans supporting trapping.

For both game bird hunting and big game hunting, the level of support indicated from respondents shows an increasing trend between 2008 and 2023, with game bird hunting increasing from 50% to 73% and big game hunting increasing from 47% to 69% in that timeframe (Q. 3E and 3F). As may be expected, there is more support shown for hunting activities (game bird and big game) in the rural respondents as compared to urban. Overall, the weighted responses indicate that most Albertans are supportive of hunting (67% game bird [Q. 3E], 58% big game [Q. 3F]).

Off-highway vehicle use had a very similar trend to big game hunting, with a clear distinction between urban and rural and overall weighted support of 55% (Q. 3G).

With respect to issues impacting wildlife conservation, loss of habitat is by far the most frequently identified issue (Q.4; 52% of respondents), continuing the trend that has existed since the first survey in 2008. For fish conservation, pollution of lakes and rivers is identified as the biggest issue (Q. 5; 52% of respondents), which again continues a trend that began in 2008.

Interestingly, pollution has declined compared to 2020 and “Reduced stream flows due to over allocation” has increased, particularly in southern Alberta.

Question 6A and 6B show a positive trend in participation rates in hunting and fishing; however, the participation rates are much greater than would be expected based on licence sales. Licenced hunters make up approximately 5% of Albertans aged 18+, yet these results show a much higher participation rate in hunting: 6% for urban respondents, 20% for rural respondents and 9% participation for Albertans overall (based on weighting).

Selection bias would explain these results if the respondents were selected in a manner as to over sample hunters; however, the survey was conducted randomly, and a similar result has occurred in each of the previous five public surveys. As a result, it is unlikely selection bias is responsible. It is possible that people hunting outside the province are indicating participating in hunting, despite the question specifically stating “in Alberta”. Alternatively, respondents may be including accompanying a hunter as “participating in hunting.” For instance, if a respondent went with a friend to observe, but did not have a licence or a gun. Although licence sales would not count an observer as a hunter, this individual may consider that she/he had participated in hunting.

A similar explanation exists for the results of Question 6B where indicated participation rates for fishing is 25% overall for Albertans (22% for urban respondents and 38% for rural respondents), which is substantially higher than the approximate 9% of Albertans 18+ that would be expected based on fishing licence sales. For instance, a mother may take her children fishing at a stocked pond and, although she does not fish, she may consider herself “participating” in fishing as an activity. In addition, no licence is required for people 65 years of age or older. As such, there are likely people who have directly participated by having a rod in hand but had no legal reason for purchasing a licence (38% of respondents were 65+ (Q. 10)).

This self-association with hunting and fishing is an outcome that may indicate people do not have to be fully engaged in the activity to feel they are part of the activity. It also may be an indication that hunting and fishing as an activity are enjoyed by a much larger percentage of the population than would be expected by licence sales alone.

Question 9 adds to the argument that many more people are positively impacted by hunting than just licensed hunters. Despite approximately 5% of Albertans 18+ having hunting licences, 41% indicated they have eaten hunter-harvested game meat in the past 12 months. This result can be thought of as every licensed hunter providing at least one meal to seven additional people in the province.

While acceptance of trapping was 54% for all Albertans (Q. 3D), only 2% indicated they had participated in trapping in the past 12 months. This participation rate is similar to previous surveys.

Birdwatching is considered in this survey as a baseline to compare a relatively easy and cheap outdoor recreational activity to hunting, fishing, and trapping. While 95% of Albertans indicated support for birdwatching (Q. 3C) only 51% indicated participation in the activity in the last 12 months (Q. 6C). However, the 51% participation is much higher than hunting, fishing, and trapping and appears to have a different demographic involved as this was the only activity where female participation was higher than male.

Despite 42% of Albertans indicating that they have participated in hunting at some time in their life (Q. 7A), many have not participated in the last 12 months. Interestingly, when asked why they no longer participate, “Cost” was identified as one of the least important issues, as was “Reduced harvest opportunity” and “Don’t know where to go” (Q. 7B). Most respondents identified a “Loss of interest” and/or “Lack of time” (Q. 7B). This result provides an incentive for hunting organizations to determine how and where to provide new hunting opportunities (to increase interest) and reduce the time required (locations closer to urban centres).

For fishing, a similar trend exists compared to hunting. A substantial proportion of Albertans (82%) indicate they have participated in fishing at some time in their life. As with hunting, “Cost,” and “Don’t know where to go” were not identified as a major factor for lack of participation; and “Lack of time” and/or “Lost interest” were the top reasons why people did not participate. This is where increased stocking of urban ponds could bring many people back to fishing since these ponds create opportunities closer to home.

Selection bias is always a concern in conducting public surveys. We attempted to control for some of these potential biases by providing a variety of questions relating to outdoor recreational activities, even though hunting, fishing, and trapping were our main areas of focus. In addition, to reduce the potential for age bias selection, Trend Research Inc. ensured that 60% of all phone numbers used were cell phones. Question 10 provides the age distribution results of the respondents. Based on the Statistics Canada 2021 Census of Population for Alberta the respondent ages were skewed toward the older two age classes.

## **CONCLUSION**

Overall, the results are positive for hunting, fishing, and trapping, with continued strong support for all three activities (more than 58% support from Albertans for hunting and 82% support for fishing). Research around participation rates, and what Albertans consider to be “participation” in hunting and fishing, would be beneficial to better clarify the discrepancy between licence sales and indicated “participation” in these activities.

In addition, it would be beneficial to hunting-related organizations to determine what role eating hunter-harvested game meat plays in developing support for hunting activities, given that four out of ten Albertans have eaten hunter-harvested game meat in the last 12 months.

## APPENDIX 1: 2023 ACA RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY SURVEY QUESTIONS

### ACA PUBLIC SURVEY – JUNE 2023

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am calling you from Trend Research and we are conducting a survey to determine Albertans' feelings about various conservation groups and issues affecting our province. We are not selling or promoting anything, and all results will be kept completely confidential.

The survey will take about 7 to 8 minutes. May I speak with someone in your household who is 18 years of age or older and able to participate at this time?

- 1        RESPONDENT ABLE TO COMPLETE SURVEY: CONTINUE
- 2        NOT AVAILABLE: ARRANGE CALLBACK

CONTACT INFORMATION IF REQUESTED:

Please contact Anastasia Arabia of Trend Research if you have any questions about the survey, at 780-485-6558.

#### **A. Are you currently employed by any type of conservation organization?**

- 1        Yes    TERMINATE
- 2        No    CONTINUE

#### **B. Record gender**

- 1        Male
- 2        Female

**1) Please name as many active conservation organizations as you can that operate in Alberta. [DO NOT READ, CHECK ALL THAT APPLY]**

1. ABA – Alberta Bowhunters Association
2. ACA – Alberta Conservation Association
3. AFGA – Alberta Fish and Game Association
4. AHEIA – Alberta Hunter Education Instructors Association
5. ATA – Alberta Trappers Association
6. APOS – Alberta Professional Outfitters Society
7. NA (FAN) – Nature Alberta (Federation of Alberta Naturalists)
8. PF – Pheasants Forever
9. TUC – Trout Unlimited Canada
10. WSFA – Wild Sheep Foundation, Alberta
11. DUC – Ducks Unlimited Canada
12. HFT – Hunting for Tomorrow
13. NCC – Nature Conservancy of Canada
14. WWF – World Wildlife Fund
15. OTHER (Please specify)

**2) Have you heard of... [RANDOMIZE & READ]**

A) 2. Alberta Conservation Association (ACA)? [ASK IF NOT MENTIONED IN Q1]

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

**DO NOT READ**

**Don't know**

B) 3. Alberta Fish and Game Association (AFGA)? [ASK IF NOT MENTIONED IN Q1]

C) 4. Alberta Hunter Education Instructors Association (AHEIA)? [ASK IF NOT MENTIONED IN Q1]

D) 5. Alberta Trappers Association (ATA)? [ASK IF NOT MENTIONED IN Q1]

E) 6. Alberta Professional Outfitters Society (APOS)? [ASK IF NOT MENTIONED IN Q1]

F) 7. Nature Alberta or Federation of Alberta Naturalists (NA or FAN)? [ASK IF NOT MENTIONED IN Q1]

G) 10. Wild Sheep Foundation, Alberta (WSFA)? [ASK IF NOT MENTIONED IN Q1]

H) 8. Pheasants Forever (PF)? [ASK IF NOT MENTIONED IN Q1]

I) 9. Trout Unlimited Canada (TUC)? [ASK IF NOT MENTIONED IN Q1]

J) 11. Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC)? [ASK IF NOT MENTIONED IN Q1]

K) 12. Hunting For Tomorrow (HFT)? [ASK IF NOT MENTIONED IN Q1]

L) 13. Nature Conservancy Canada (NCC)? [ASK IF NOT MENTIONED IN Q1]

M) 14. World Wildlife Fund (WWF)? [ASK IF NOT MENTIONED IN Q1]

N) 1. Alberta Bowhunters Association

**3) Using a one to seven scale where ONE means DO NOT SUPPORT AT ALL, FOUR means SUPPORT, and SEVEN means COMPLETELY SUPPORT, rate your level of support of the following activities. [RANDOMIZE & READ]**

A. catch & **release** fishing

1 - Do not support at all

2

3

4 - Support

5

6

7 - Completely support

**[DO NOT READ] Don't Know**

B. catch & **keep** fishing

C. birdwatching

D. trapping

E. game bird hunting

F. big game hunting

G. off-highway vehicle use

**4) With respect to wildlife conservation which of the following do you believe is the biggest issue in Alberta at this time? [SELECT ONE ANSWER ONLY]**

1. \_\_\_ Loss of native wildlife habitat

2. \_\_\_ Lack of wildlife research

3. \_\_\_ Over hunting

4. \_\_ Wildlife diseases

9. \_\_ Don't Know

**5) With respect to fish conservation which of the following do you believe is the biggest issue in Alberta at this time? [SELECT ONE ANSWER ONLY]**

1. \_\_ Reduced stream flows due to over allocation of water

2. \_\_ Lack of fisheries research

3. \_\_ Overfishing

4. \_\_ Pollution of lakes, and rivers

9. \_\_ Don't Know

**6) In the past 12 months have you participated in any of the following outdoor activities in Alberta. [RANDOMIZE & READ]]**

A. hunting

1 Yes

2 No

**DO NOT READ**

**Don't know**

B. fishing

C. birdwatching

D. trapping



**7A) Have you participated in hunting at any time in the past? [ASK IF Q6A = 2]**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

**DO NOT READ**

**Don't know**

**7B) What are some of the reasons you have not participated in hunting in the past 12 months?**

[ASK if Q7A = 1] [DO NOT READ, CHECK ALL THAT APPLY]

- 1.  Lack of time
- 2.  Cost
- 3.  Reduce opportunity to harvest
- 4.  Don't know where to go
- 5.  Regulations (Federal & Provincial)
- 6.  Lost interest
- 7.  Age (e.g., too old)
- 8.  Health
- 9.  Other [Please Specify] \_\_\_\_\_
- 99. DK/REF

**8A) Have you participated in fishing at any time in the past? [ASK IF Q6B = 2]**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

**DO NOT READ**

**Don't know**

**8B) What are some of the reasons you have not participate in fishing in the past 12 months?**

[ASK if Q8A = 1] [DO NOT READ, CHECK ALL THAT APPLY]

- 1.  Lack of time
- 2.  Cost
- 3.  Reduce opportunity to harvest
- 4.  Don't know where to go
- 5.  Regulations (Federal & Provincial)
- 6.  Lost interest
- 7.  Age (e.g., too old)
- 8.  Health
- 9.  Other [Please Specify] \_\_\_\_\_
- 99. DK/REF

**9) In the past 12 months have you eaten game meat harvested through hunting activities?**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

**10) Please provide your age range:**

1. 18-25

2. 26-35

3. 36-50

4. 51-64

5. 65+

9. DK/REF