Ontario Biodiversity Council

Biodiversity in Ontario
2020 Report

January 2020

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METHODOLOGY & LOGISTICS

Overview

The following represents the results of a January 2020 Ontario omnibus telephone survey of N=1500 residents, 18 years of age or older, conducted by Oraclepoll Research Ltd. The results contained in this report are from the questions subscribed to by the Ontario Biodiversity Council on issues related to knowledge and awareness of biodiversity issues. Questions asked were first benchmarked in a 2014 telephone survey of Ontarians by Oraclepoll (N=1000) and then tracked in 2016 (N=1000).

Reporting

This report contains the executive findings from the current survey and compares the results to the previous two survey waves. A separate Excel report contains the results by each individual question and a crosstabulation of the findings by area and demographics.

Study Sample

A total of N=1500 interviews were completed, with residents across the province. All respondents were screened to ensure that they were residents of Ontario, that they were 18 years of age or older and eligible to vote in the province. The sample was stratified to ensure a representative breakdown by regions. The adjacent table provides a breakdown of the total sample by area or region.

GTA	N=297	20%
Toronto	N=295	20%
Southwest	N=280	19%
Niagara / Hamilton	N=238	16%
Eastern	N=195	13%
Central	N=105	7%
North	N=90	6%
Total	**N=1500**	**100%**

A randomized dual sample frame database was used that was inclusive of cellular and land line telephone numbers.

Logistics

The poll was conducted by telephone with live person-to-person operators at the Oraclepoll call centre facility using computer-assisted techniques of telephone interviewing (CATI) and random number selection (RDD). A total of 20% of all interviews were monitored and the management of Oraclepoll Research supervised 100%.

Initial calls were made between the hours of 6:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. Subsequent call-backs of no-answers and busy numbers were made on a (staggered) daily rotating basis up to 5 times (from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.) until contact was made. In addition, telephone interview appointments were attempted with those respondents unable to complete the survey at the time of contact. If no contact was made at a number after the fifth attempt, the number was discarded and a new one supplanted it.

Survey interviews took place between the days of January 15th to January 25th, 2020.

Confidence

The margin of error for the N=1500 sample is ±2.5 % 19/20 times. Error rates vary and are larger for geographic and demographic sub-samples of the survey population. Results displayed in some tables and graphs may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

BIODIVERSITY AWARENESS

All N=1500 survey respondents were first asked the following awareness question related to the term biodiversity.

Q1. "Are you aware of the term biodiversity?"
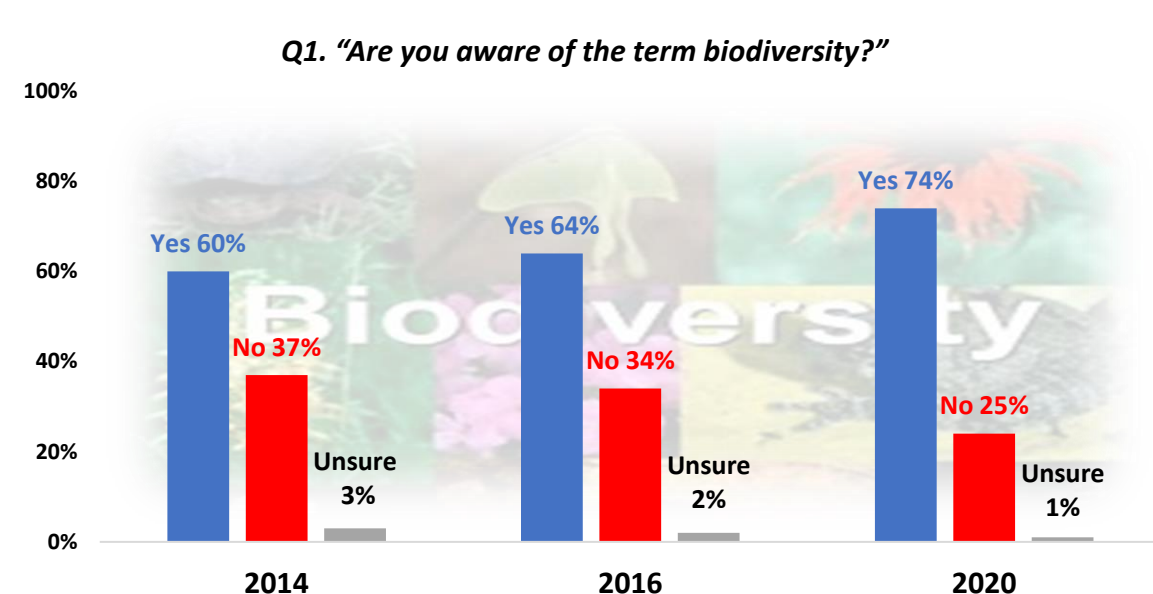
A total of 74% (N=1105) of Ontarians are aware of the term biodiversity representing a +10% increase over the 2016 survey wave and +14% more than in 2014.

Younger respondents 18-24 (81%) and 25-34 (78%), were most aware of the term, closely followed by those 35-44 (76%) and 45-54 (73%). Seven in ten 55-64-year old's are aware and the lowest knowledge was among seniors 65+ at 65%.

	YES	NO	UNSURE
18-24	81%	19%	1%
25-34	78%	21%	1%
35-44	76%	23%	2%
45-54	73%	26%	1%
55-64	70%	29%	1%
65+	65%	33%	2%

	YES	NO	UNSURE
Central	70%	29%	1%
Eastern	75%	23%	2%
Toronto	78%	21%	1%
GTA	81%	19%	<1%
Niagara/Ham.	71%	27%	1%
Southwest	68%	31%	1%
North	60%	39%	1%

Awareness levels were highest in the GTA (81%) and City of Toronto (78%), next by Eastern Ontario (75%), while lowest in the North (60%).

Mid ($75,000-$99,999, 77%) and higher earners ($100,000+, 76%) had a slightly higher level of awareness than those earning less (under $75,000, 72%). There were no significant variances as a function of age, but those with university degrees (81%) and diplomas from college or a trade school (75%) were most likely to have heard of the term biodiversity.

UNDERSTANDING OF TERM

The 74% of respondents (N=1105) that were aware of the term biodiversity in Q1 were then asked a series of follow-up questions. They were first read a series of five definitions and were asked to name which one best fit their understanding of the term biodiversity.

Q2. *"Which of the following definitions best fit your understanding of biodiversity?"*
READ LIST / ACCEPT ONE ONLY

	2014	2016	2020
The variety of life on earth	59%	58%	61%
The environment and nature	19%	21%	13%
Sustainable development	9%	8%	10%
Parks and Protected areas	-	4%	7%
Human, religious and cultural variety	8%	5%	6%
Don't know	5%	4%	3%

Results are consistent over the three survey touch points with the variety of life on earth being most named by 61% (+3% over 2016), with university (64%) as well as college graduates (68%), most naming it in addition to Eastern Ontario residents (73%) and females (64%) in relation to males (58%) and Northerners (54%).

The environment and nature were next most recalled by 13% but -8% lower over 2016 (rural 17% versus urban 11%), followed by sustainable development at 10% (15% of GTA & 14% of Toronto residents) and parks and protected areas at 7% (22% of Northerners). Six percent said human, religious and cultural variety, while 3% were unsure or did not know.

USAGE OF THE TERM

The 74% of respondents (N=1105) that were aware of the term biodiversity were next asked if they have ever used the word in a conversation.

Q3. "Have you ever used the word biodiversity in a conversation with your friends, family or co-workers?"
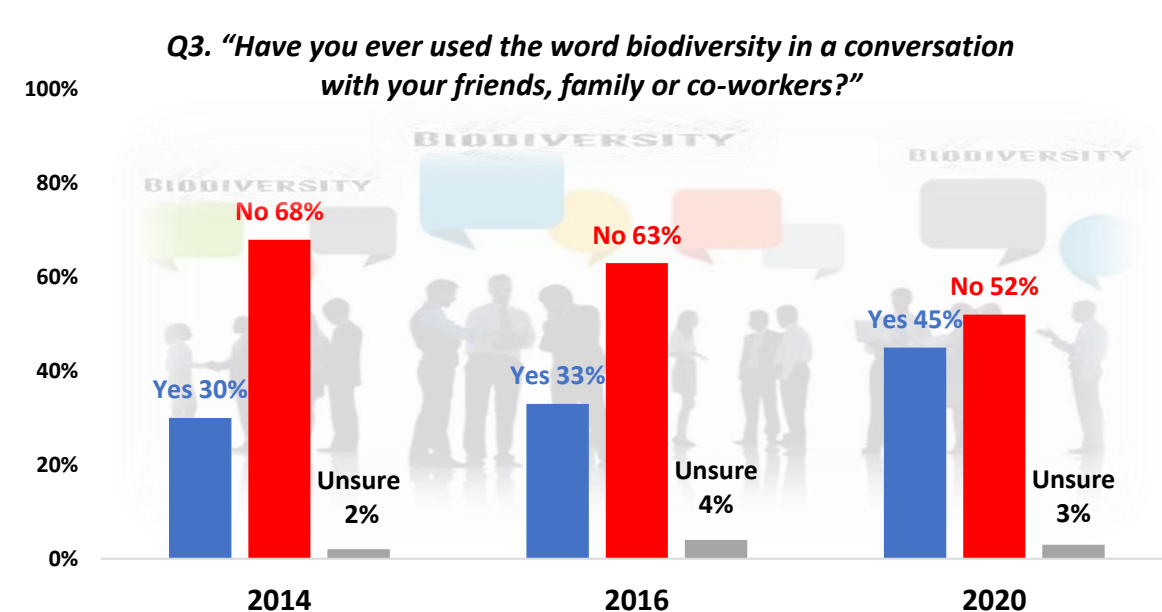
Forty-five percent of Ontarians aware of the term biodiversity said they have used the word in a conversation compared to 30% in 2014 and 33% in 2016.

Younger respondents 18-24 (59%) and 35-34 (53%) were most likely to have used the term, followed by 35-44 (46%), 45-54 (43%) and 55-64-year old's and only 23% of those 65+. Urban (48%) compared to rural (40%) residents were more likely to have used the word, as are those with university degrees (57%).

HOW THEY BECAME AWARE

In an open-ended probe allowing for one top of mind verbatim response, the 74% of respondents (N=1105) that were aware of the term biodiversity were asked how they first learned of the word.

Q4. "Where did you first learn or hear about the term biodiversity?"

	2014	2016	2020
School	22%	30%	25%
Don't know	29%	24%	17%
Social media	-	2%	15%
Television	16%	17%	14%
Newspaper	17%	12%	13%
Read about it (unspecified)	7%	6%	5%
Through work	7%	5%	3%
Earth Day / other environmental events	-	-	3%
Internet websites	-	2%	2%
Through a friend / family member	-	1%	2%
Conservation authorities	2%	1%	1%
The radio	-	1%	1%

School was the most named source by 25% (-5% compared to 2016) of respondents and by 44% of those 18-24. Social media followed at 15% (+13%) with those aged 25-34 (48%) and 18-24 (32%) most likely to name it. Television was named by 14%, down -3% (55 to 64 – 20% & 65 or older – 21%), newspapers by 13%, up +1 (65 or older – 32%). Other mentions included just reading about it, environmental events, internet websites (18-24 – 13%), through acquaintances, conservation authorities and radio.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

In an open-ended probe allowing for one verbatim response, the 74% of respondents (N=1105) that were aware of the term biodiversity were questioned about how they get information about biodiversity.

Q5. "Where do you obtain information about biodiversity?"

	2014	2016	2020
Internet websites	21%	32%	35%
Don't know	31%	22%	18%
Social media	-	3%	11%
Newspaper	12%	10%	8%
Television	5%	8%	6%
Books	8%	7%	6%
Experts / environmentalists / scientists	2%	2%	5%
Through other people	3%	5%	4%
School	7%	3%	3%
Read about it	7%	4%	2%
Magazine	2%	3%	1%
Radio	2%	1%	1%

Internet websites continue to be the main source by which respondents obtain information at 35% a +3% increase over 2016 and especially among 18-24-year old's (49%). Social media now follows in second at 11% (+8%) with the highest recall among those 25-34 (30%) and 18-24 (23%). Newspapers were cited by 8% (55-64 – 13% & 65 or older 12%), TV by 6% (65 or older – 23%), books by 6%, science or environmental experts 5% (25-34 – 10% & 35-44 – 9%), through word of mouth by 4% and school by 3% (18-24 – 20%).

MOST INFLUENTIAL SOURCE

The final set of questions were asked to all N=1500 survey respondents. They were first asked the following about what information source they considered to be the most influential one to educate the public about biodiversity. The question was semi-open in that they were prompted with a list of possible choices.

Q6. "Which source of information do you think is the most influential to educate Ontarians about biodiversity?"

	2014	2016	2020
School	38%	35%	33%
Internet websites	30%	33%	31%
Social media	-	4%	21%
TV	17%	15%	9%
Newspaper	11%	10%	4%
Don't know	4%	3%	2%

School or formal education is still seen by most or 33% as the most influential although the numbers have dropped -2% compared to 2016 and down -5% in relation to 2014. In at a close and consistent 31% (-2% off 2016) are internet websites, while there has been a sharp increase in the number of Ontarians that named social media at 21% (+17% over 2016). The percentage that named television (9%) and newspapers (4%) continues to drop (-6% for each).

AGE TO EDUCATE

All N=1500 respondents were next asked to recall the age range that they felt it would be most important to educate Ontarians about biodiversity in order to improve awareness. They were read age cohorts and were asked to select their preference.

Q7. "Which age group is the most important to educate in order to advance awareness of biodiversity?"

	2014	2016	2020
Under 12	44%	40%	39%
12-17	35%	41%	44%
18-24	13%	15%	14%
25-40	6%	2%	1%
40-59	2%	1%	1%
Don't know	1%	2%	1%

Most Ontarians believe that in order to advance the awareness of biodiversity, residents under the age of 18 need to be educated. This includes 44% that stated the age cohort of 12 to 17 years of age (+3 over 2016) and 39% ages under 12 (-1%). There were 14% that mentioned 18-24 and only 1% for each of 25-40 and 40-59, while no one named ages over 60.

MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE

In this semi-open-ended question, all N=1500 respondents were read a list of issues and were then asked which one they felt was the most important one affecting the biodiversity of the province.

Q8. "In your opinion, what is the most important issue impacting Ontario's biodiversity?"

	2014	2016	2020
Climate change	11%	12%	28%
Pollution and pesticides	28%	24%	18%
Habitat loss	20%	19%	17%
Unsustainable use of resources	18%	17%	15%
Human population growth	11%	11%	9%
Don't know	10%	11%	6%
Invasive species	2%	4%	5%
None	1%	1%	1%

Climate change is now seen as the most important issue facing Ontario's biodiversity by 28%, a +16% increase compared to 2016. Pollution and pesticides follow at 18% (down -6%), followed by habitat loss at 17% and the unsustainable use of resources at 15% - both consistent but -2% lower over 2016 for each. Other mentions included population growth (9%) and invasive species (5%).

BIODIVERSITY – HEALTH & WELL BEING

In the next question, respondents (N=1500) were asked to rate their level of agreement with a statement about the role of biodiversity in maintaining health using a scale from 1-strongly disagree to 5- strongly agree. The numbers in the chart below combine the total agree (4-agree & 5-strongly agree) as well as the total disagree (1-strongly disagree & 2-disagree) results.

Q9. "Biodiversity plays an important role in maintaining my health and well-being."
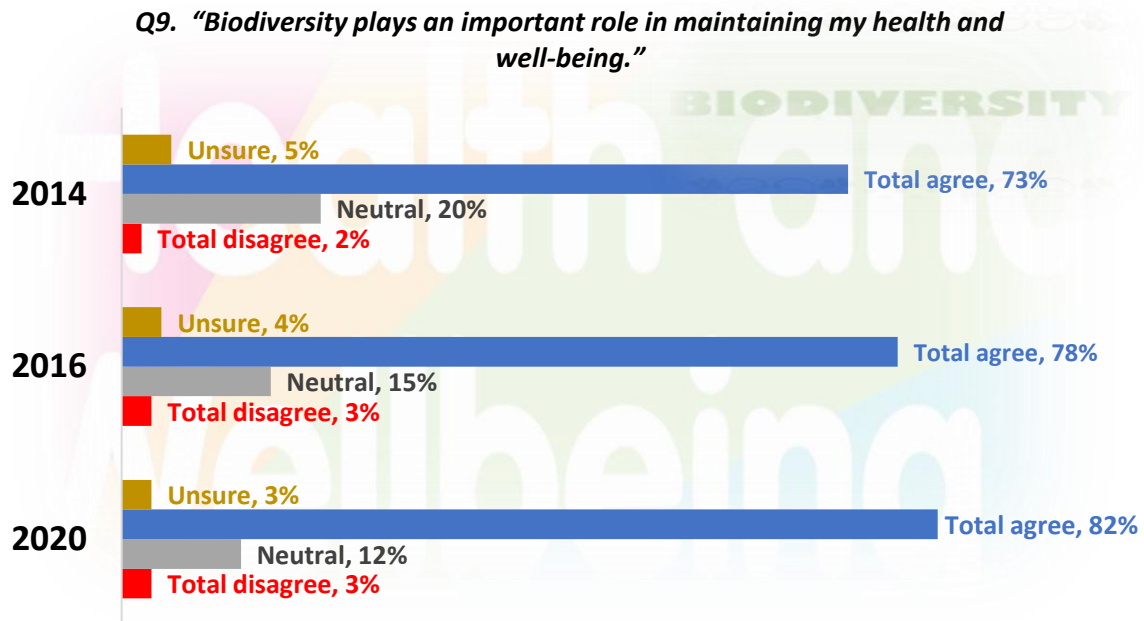
A total of 82% surveyed agreed (27%) or strongly agreed (55%) that biodiversity plays an important role in maintaining their health and well being, a +4% increase over 2016. Only 3% disagreed or do not feel it plays an important role, 12% had a neutral opinion of neither agree nor disagree and 3% did not know.

In a final semi-open-ended question, all N=1500 respondents were read a list of aspects of biodiversity and were then asked which one they felt had the greatest impact on their health.

Q10. "In your opinion, what aspect of biodiversity has the greatest impact on your health?"

	2014	2016	2020
Cleaner air and water	38%	40%	47%
Availability of healthy food	20%	17%	16%
Climate regulation	6%	8%	12%
Prevention of diseases	10%	11%	9%
Improved physical & mental health - outdoor experiences	12%	11%	8%
Don't know	9%	7%	4%
Medicines sourced from wild species	5%	6%	3%

Cleaner air and water are still the most named areas where Ontarians feel that biodiversity has the greatest impact on their individual health at 47%, up +7% compared to 2016. The next most mentioned was the availability of heathy food by 16% (-1%), while climate regulation followed at 12%, a +4% increase over 2016. There were 9% that said prevention of diseases (-2%), 8% improved physical and mental health (-3%) and only 3% medicines (-3%).