British Columbia coastal residents' perspectives on ocean contributions to well-being

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People depend on and interact with the ocean in diverse ways, and these relationships can have important implications for their well-being.

As Canada advances ocean protection through the establishment of marine protected areas (MPAs are areas of the ocean set aside for long-term conservation aims), understanding the diverse values people hold for the ocean is increasingly important for informing effective and inclusive marine conservation.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) conducted a survey with residents of coastal communities in British Columbia (BC) to:

- **Identify** the diverse values BC coastal residents hold for the ocean;
- **Understand** their perceptions of marine protected areas (MPAs); and
- **Assess** whether surveys can provide a feasible and effective approach for collecting social and cultural data to inform marine conservation processes.

Example of types of values

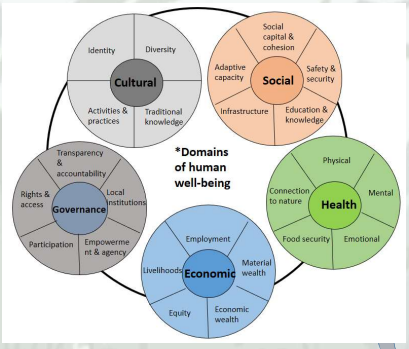
Social: Learning, social capital, sense of place, recreation

Economic: Livelihoods, economic wealth, transportation.

Cultural: Identity, diversity, traditional knowledge.

Environmental: Climate regulation, oxygen production, carbon sequestration.

Methodology



The human well-being framework informed the survey design. (i.e., type of values, ocean dependence options and ways MPAs may support oceans values).

Survey design:

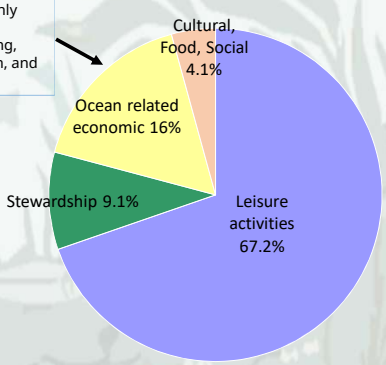
- ✓ Data collection: Mar 26 to April 28, 2024.
- ✓ Target audience: BC coastal residents
- ✓ Respondents contacted by email and cell phone
- ✓ 1,701 survey participants
- ✓ Response rate: 13% online/4% by phone
- ✓ Survey administrated by a contractor (EKOS)



*Kaplan-Hallam, M. & Bennett, N.J. (2018), Adaptive social impact management for conservation and environmental management. Conservation Biology, 32: 304-314. https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.12985

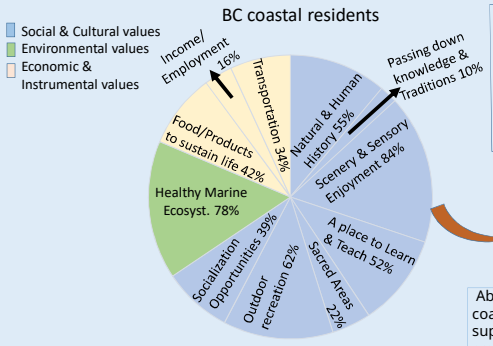
Ocean related economic sectors were mainly represented by recreational fishing, marine recreation, and tourism.

Survey participants' engagement in marine and ocean activities



Findings

Importance of ocean values BC coastal residents

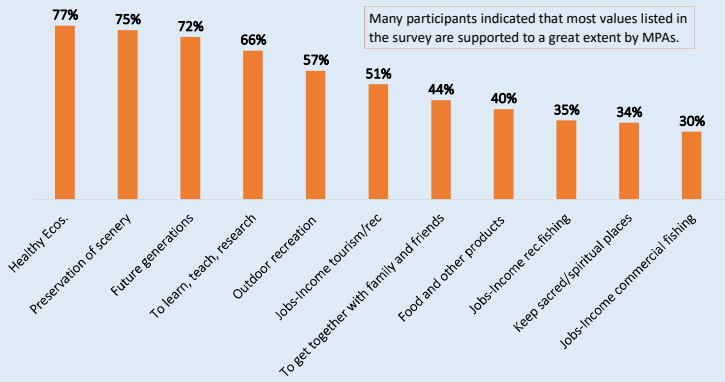


Social, cultural, & environmental values are identified as important more often than economic or instrumental ones.

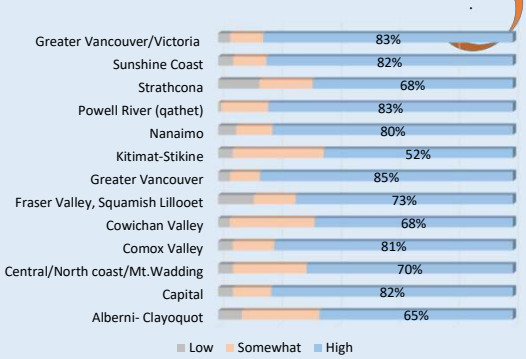
About 82% of BC coastal residents support the creation of MPAs

Perceptions on How MPAs Support Ocean Values

Many participants indicated that most values listed in the survey are supported to a great extent by MPAs.



Support for MPAs in BC by Coastal District



Applications

The survey provided a broad baseline against which future changes in ocean values and support for MPAs can be assessed

Information about what values are important for coastal residents in BC can be incorporated in the design of monitoring programs to better understand conservation outcomes, and to inform adaptive management.

Survey implementation highlights considerations for assessing non-economic values.
e.g.: controlling externalities/exogenous variables; ensuring representative sample, limitations to capture non-quantifiable values.

Survey results on BC coastal communities' perspectives can inform key messaging for awareness & outreach campaigns.

Possible extensions of this work include examining effects of survey method on findings, or exploring values about specific MPAs vs. marine conservation in general.

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Scan the code to see additional information about this survey

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