



International Joint Commission Great Lakes Water Quality Board

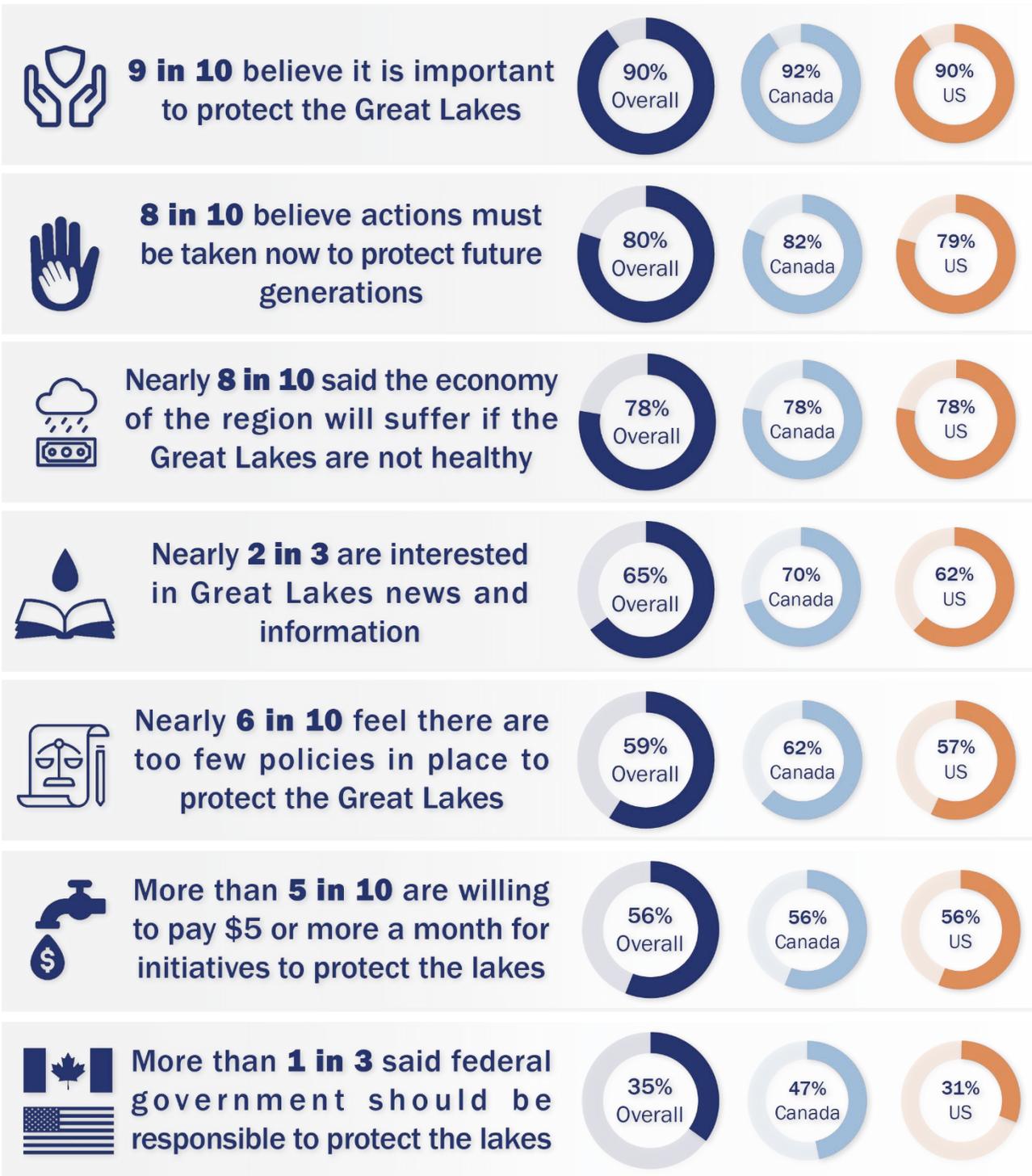
2021 Great Lakes Regional Poll Canadian/US Results Decision-Maker Briefing Booklet

- The International Joint Commission Great Lakes Water Quality Board's triennial Great Lakes Regional Poll reflects perceptions of Canadian and US residents within the Great Lakes basin region on key Great Lakes topics.
- This briefing booklet highlights key results of select questions of interest or relevance to decision-makers. This does not include complete results of the 2021 polling efforts, which are [available online](#).
- Graphs highlight similarities and differences among Canadian and US respondents. A [companion briefing booklet](#) compares Indigenous respondents results by affiliation.
- Where applicable, 2021 telephone poll results are compared to results from the Great Lakes Water Quality Board's 2015 and 2018 Great Lakes Regional Polls.

[IJC.ORG/WQB/GREAT-LAKES-POLL](https://www.ijc.org/wqb/great-lakes-poll)

KEY FINDINGS

Comparing poll responses **overall** with responses of **Canadian** and **United States** residents



The 2021 phone poll included **4,550 respondents overall**.

Of these, there were **1,385 respondents from Canada** and **3,165 respondents from the United States**.

Overview

About the IJC Great Lakes Water Quality Board

The International Joint Commission's (IJC) Great Lakes Water Quality Board is the principal advisor to the IJC under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

About the board's Great Lakes Regional Polls

The IJC's Great Lakes Water Quality Board conducts this poll every three years to gauge residents' perceptions of water quality issues, the importance of, and perceived threats to, the Great Lakes, and their awareness of cross-border efforts to protect the Great Lakes. The board conducts its polls through telephone surveys of Canadian and US residents living in the Great Lakes basin. The 2015 poll established baseline data, and the 2018 and 2021 polls illuminate longitudinal findings and trends. In 2021 the poll was administered by telephone (4,550 respondents) and online (4,675 respondents).

The following results in this briefing book highlight key questions of relevance to federal decision-makers. Findings present the overall results of the 2015, 2018 and 2021 phone polls (as applicable), paired with the 2021 phone responses comparing responses of Canadian and US residents. A [companion briefing booklet](#) compares responses of First Nations, Métis and Tribal Nations citizens for a similar subset of 2021 phone poll questions.

About the value of public opinion polling to inform Great Lakes policy

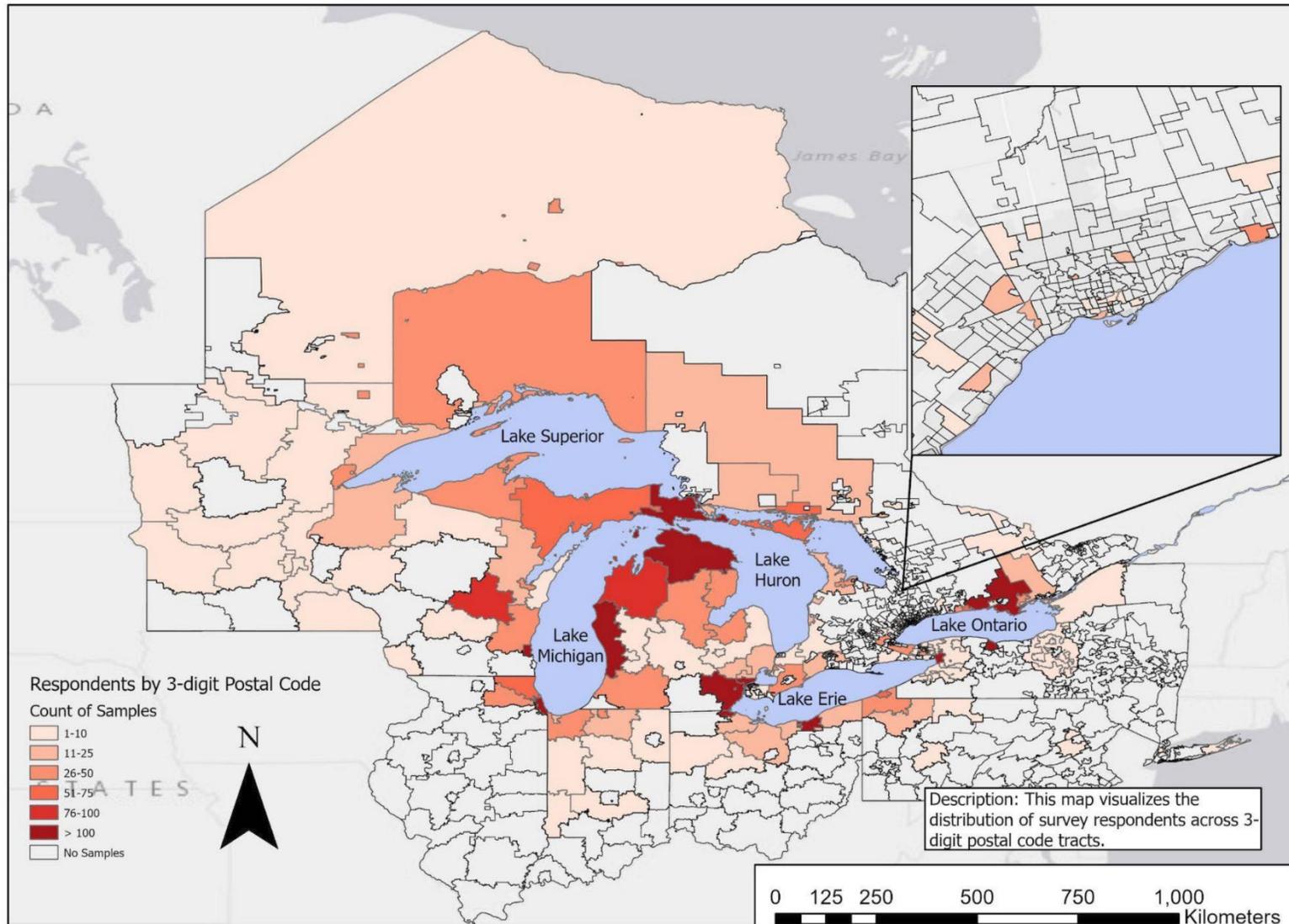
Poll results represent residents' views and values on topics such as environmental health and water quality, the importance of protection and policy efficacy. Polls are snapshots of public opinion at a given moment; however, as evident throughout this report, there are clear long-term trends in residents' perceptions of the quality of the Great Lakes region. The latest poll results, long-term trends, and similarities or differences between Canadian and US residents can all help inform decision makers about the views of their constituents on topics relevant to Great Lakes policy measures and can help inform future policy decisions.

What poll results cannot explain is the reasoning or motivation behind why residents hold these views and values. In 2022 and 2023 the board will be expanding its analysis of the 2021 poll results with methods like focus groups to better understand the "why" behind these public opinions. The board will conduct its next Great Lakes Regional Poll in 2024.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Geospatial distribution of respondents	1
KEY RESULTS, OVER TIME	
Importance of protection	2
Impact on the economy of the region if the Great Lakes are not healthy.....	3
Who should be responsible for protection	4
Policies , regulations, programs and actions	5
Interest in Great Lakes news and information	6
WATER QUALITY USES AND CONCERNS	
Status and trend of the health of residents’ preferred lake	7
Affordable, equitable access to drinking water	8
Effective community management and treatment of used wastewater or sewage	9
Use for leisure or recreation	10
Actions should be taken now for the benefit of future generations	11
Protection for the benefit of fish and wildlife	12
Impacts of climate change	13
INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS AND VALUES	
Importance of the role of the individual in protecting the lakes.....	14
Willingness to pay for water quality initiatives	15
Likelihood to take part in public meetings	16
Likelihood to engage in an online forum or group	17
Likelihood to contact a local elected representative/government official	18
Likelihood to sign a petition	19
WATER QUALITY STATUS AND TRENDS BY LAKE	
Lake Superior	20
Lake Huron	21
Lake Michigan	22
Lake Erie	23
Lake Ontario	24
Additional information	25

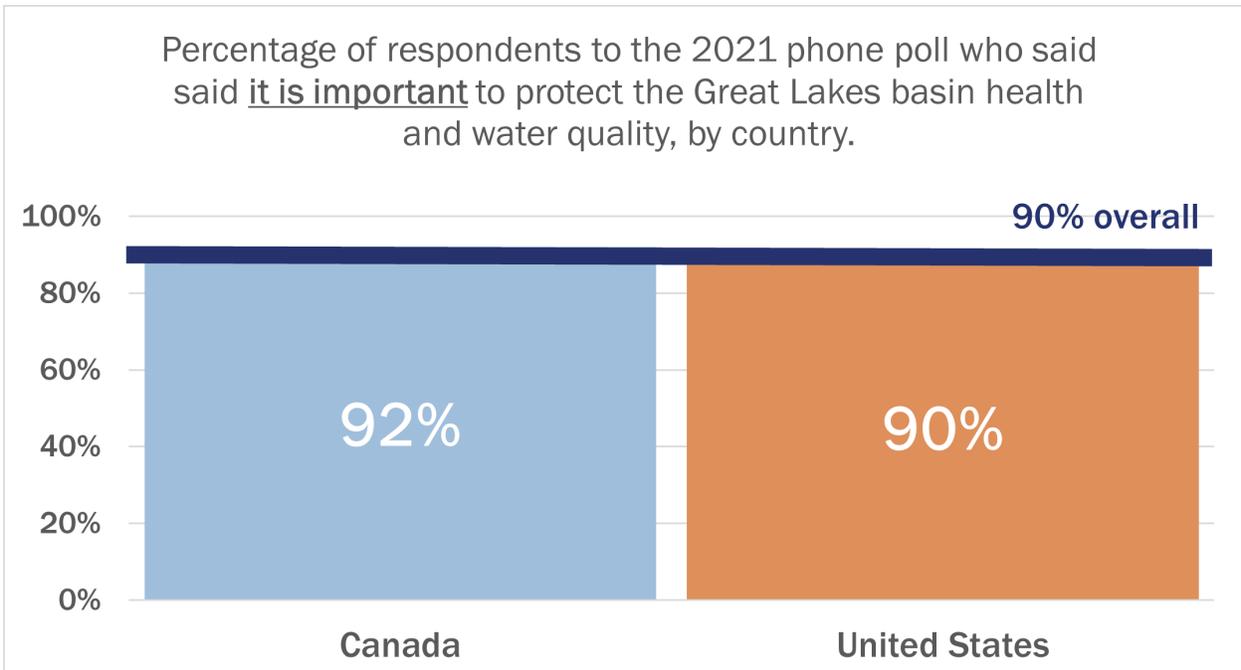
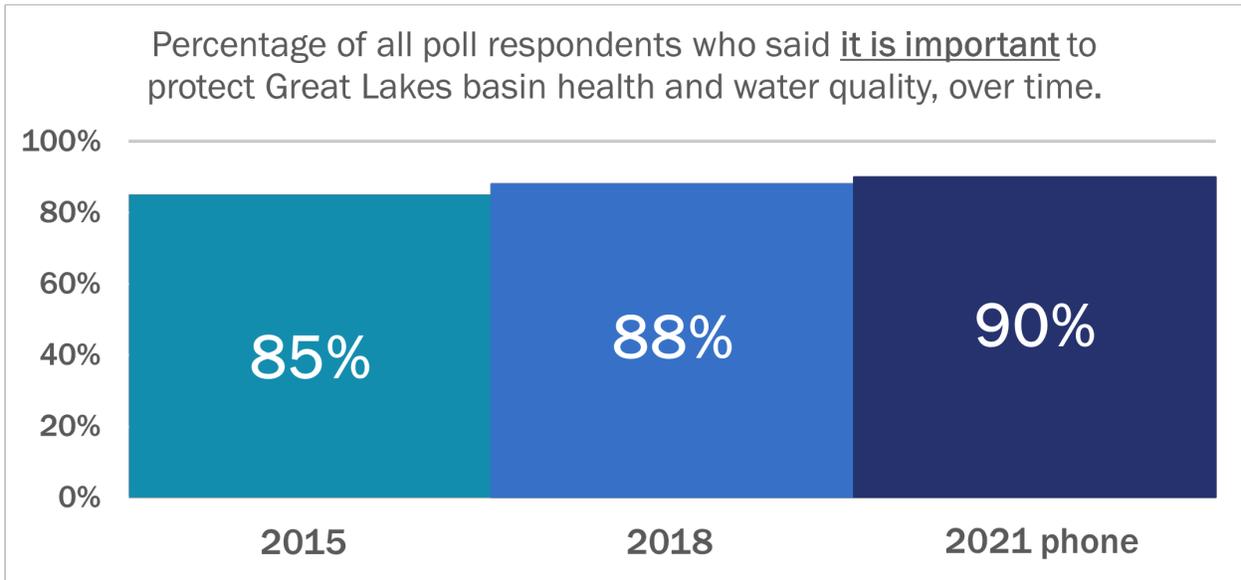
Geospatial distribution of respondents to the 2021 phone poll



Source: Christopher Rudolph, Geospatial Analysis using 3-digit zip/postal code question in 2021 phone poll.

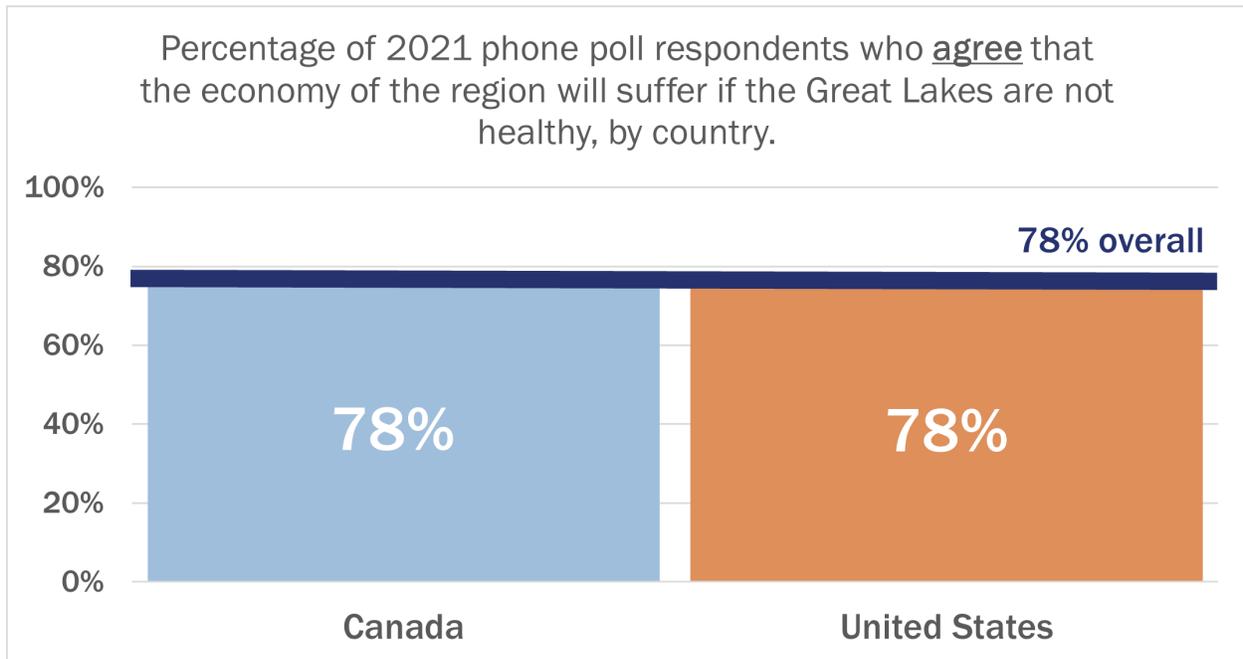
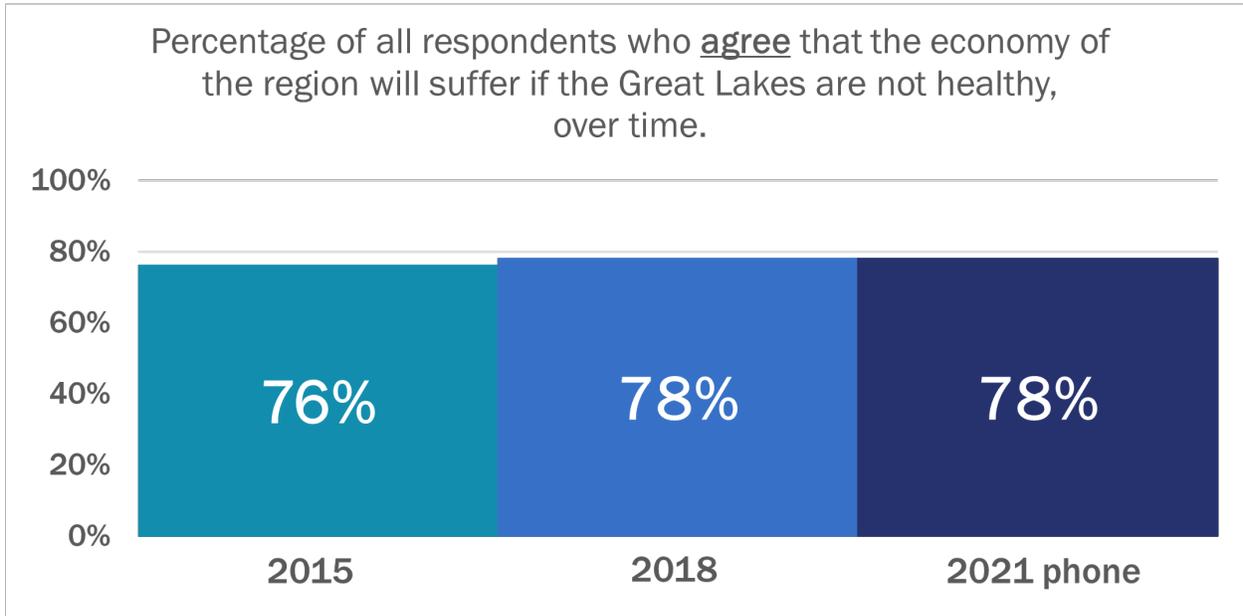
There were 4,550 total responses to the 2021 phone poll, including a base sample of 3,950, a cohort quota of 500 individuals self-identifying as First Nations, Métis or Tribal Nation citizens, and 100 individuals that reported to live full-time or part-time on a Great Lakes Island.

Importance of protecting Great Lakes water quality



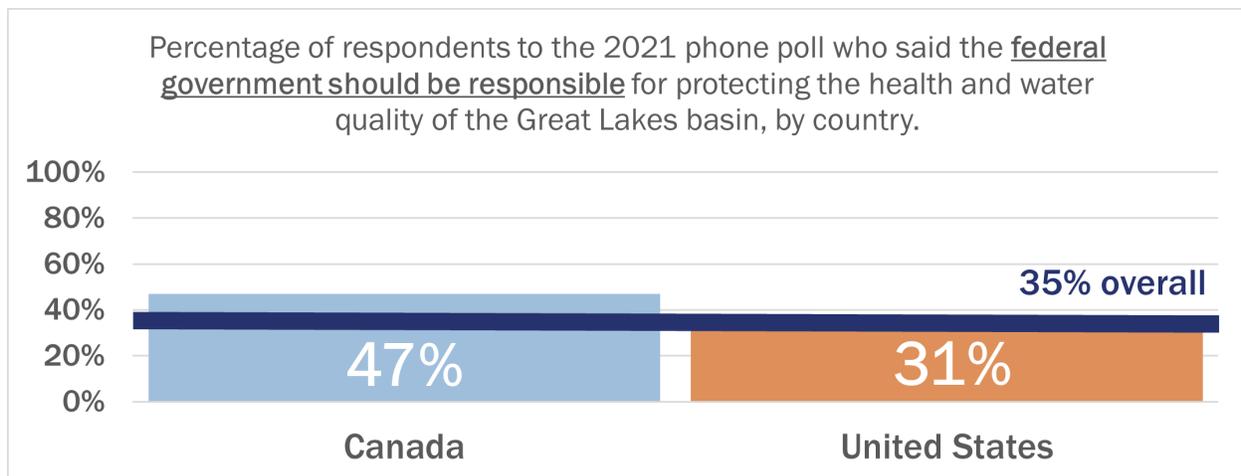
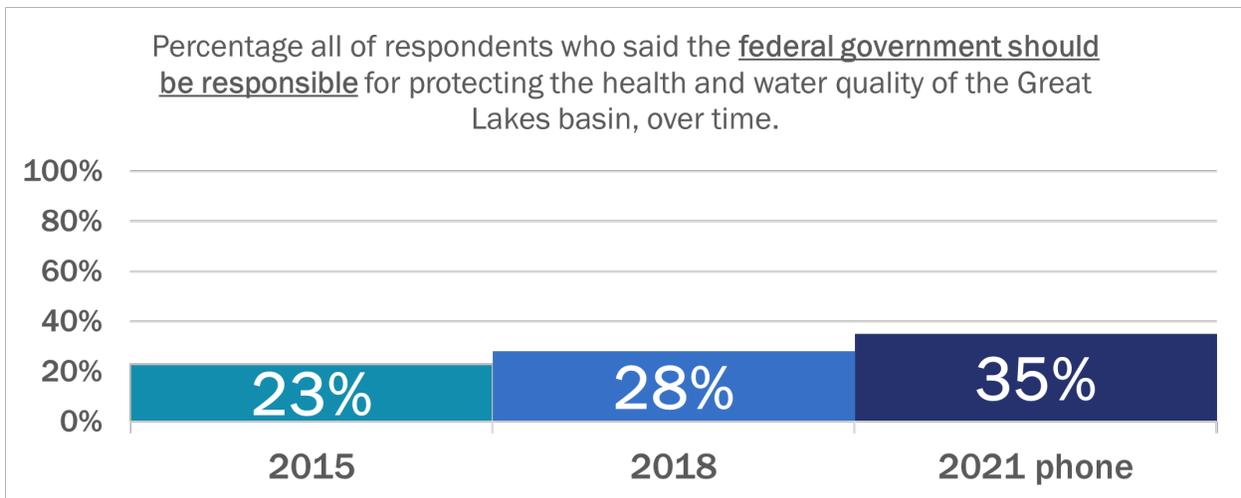
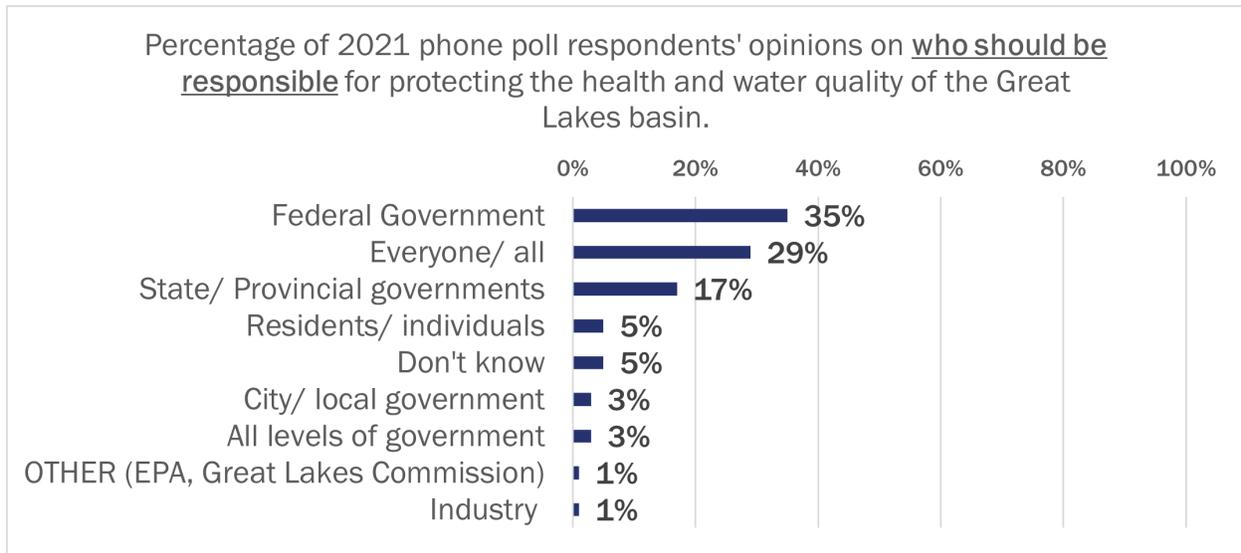
[2021 phone poll Question 10](#): On a scale of 1 to 5, “How important is it that the health and water quality of the Great Lakes basin be protected?” Responses: 1-not at all important (2%); 2-not important (2%); 3-neither important nor unimportant (3%); 4-important (10%); 5-very important (80%); don’t know (2%).

Impact on the economy of the region if the Great Lakes are not healthy



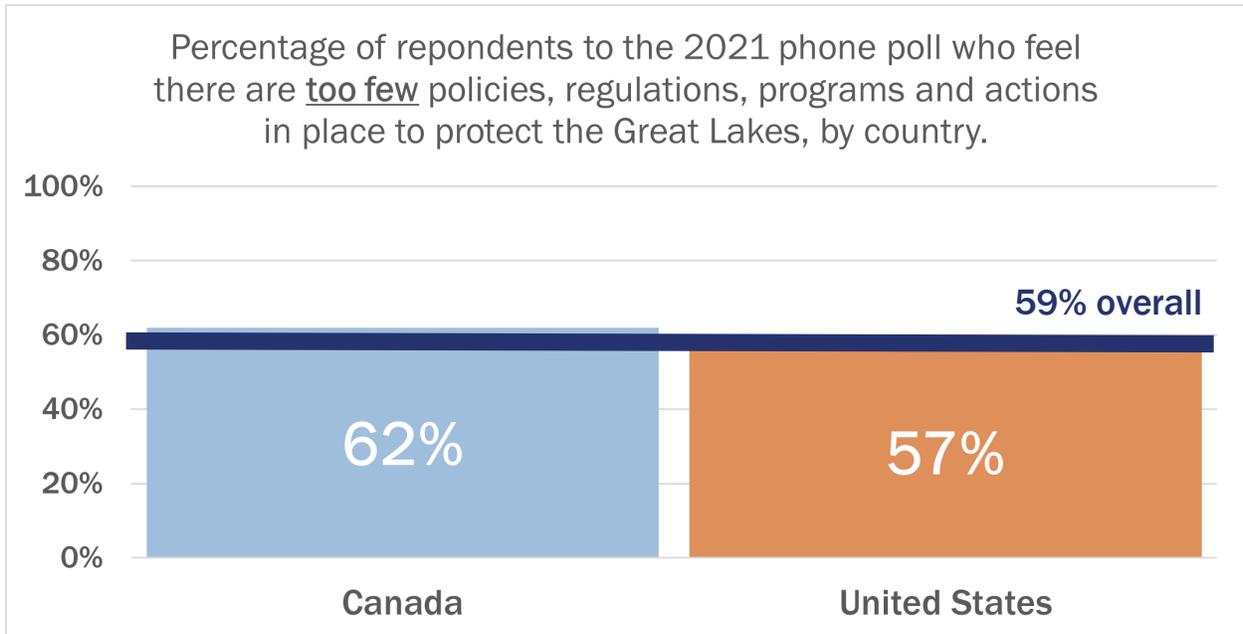
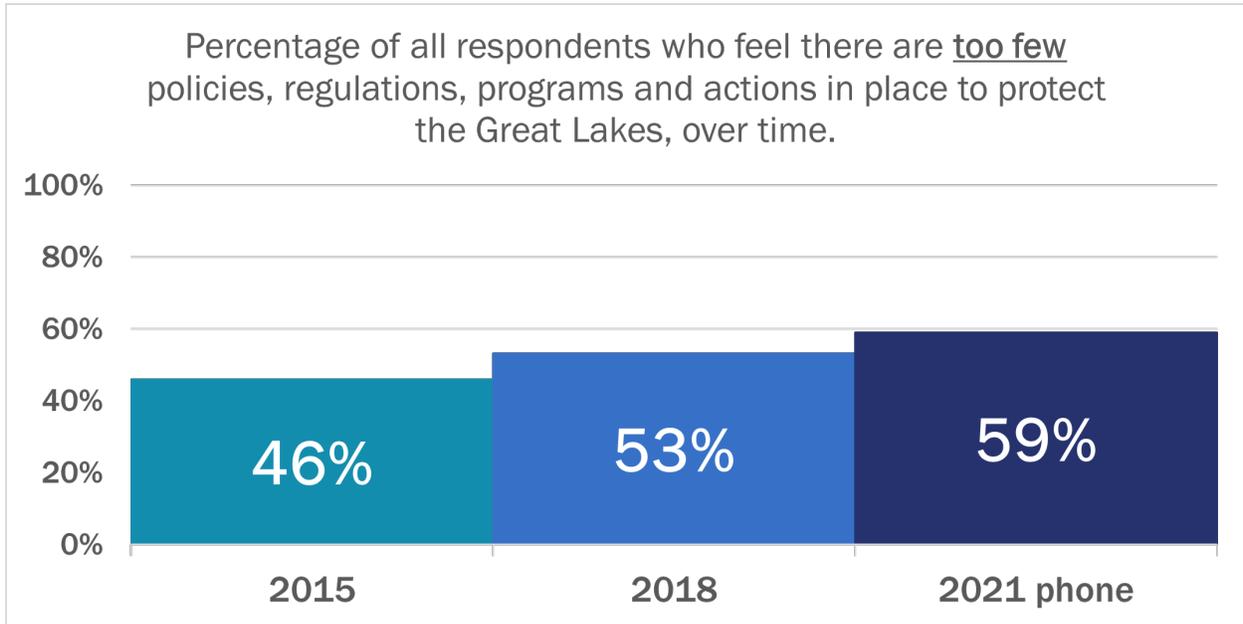
[2021 phone poll Question 46](#): On a scale of 1 to 5 rank your agreement with the statement: “The economy of the region will suffer without healthy Great Lakes.” Responses: 1-strongly disagree (1%); 2-disagree (2%); 3-neither agree nor disagree (8%); 4-agree (19%); 5-strongly agree (59%); don’t know (12%).

Who should be responsible for protecting Great Lakes water quality?



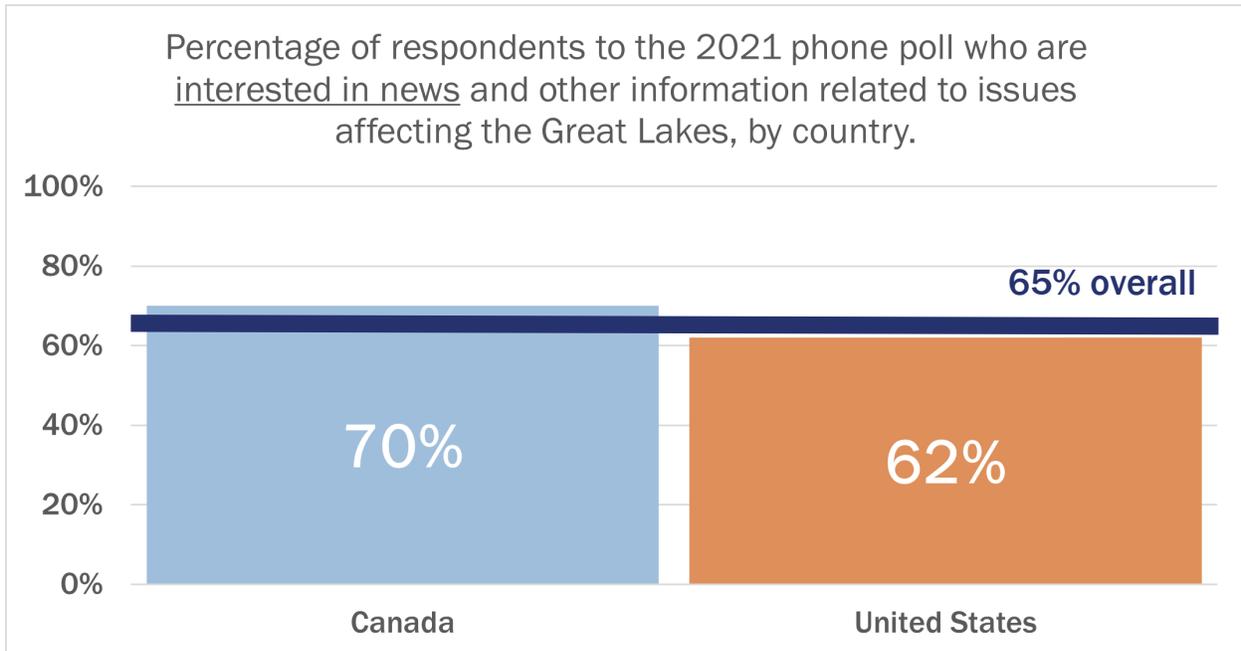
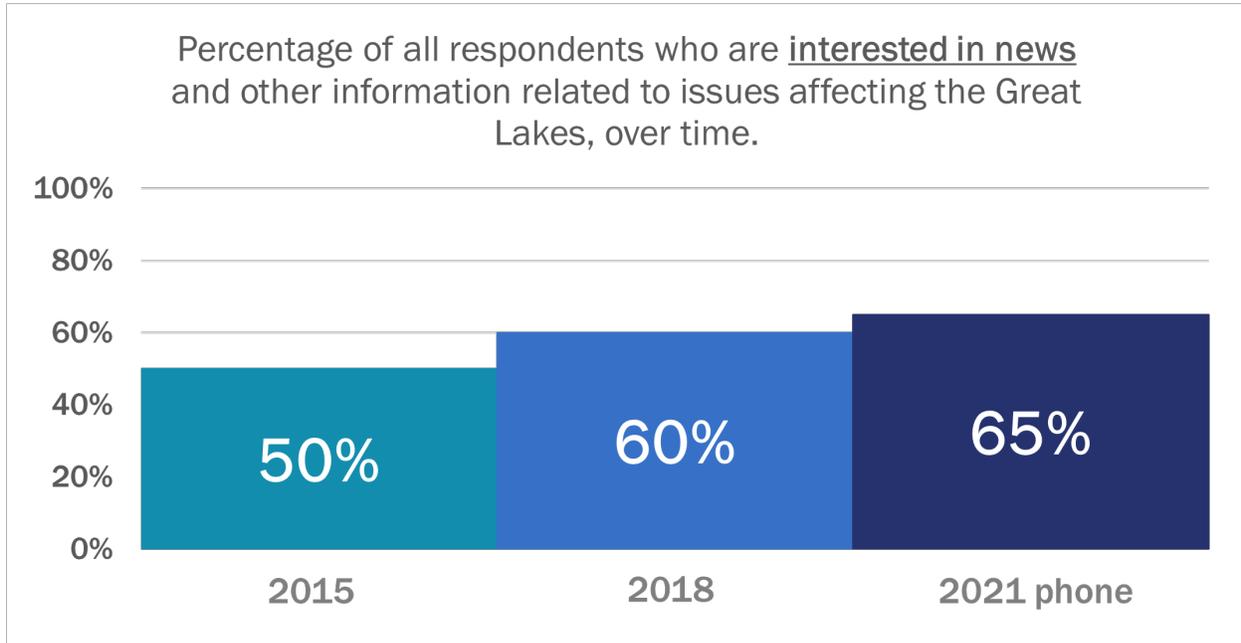
This open-ended question corresponds to [Question 13 in the 2021 phone poll](#).

Opinions on policies, regulations, programs and actions in place to protect the Great Lakes



[2021 phone poll question 16a](#): “Thinking about the policies, regulations, programs and actions in place to protect the Great Lakes, do you feel there are too many, too few or just the right amount?” Responses: too few (59%); just right (14%); too many (4%); don’t know (23%).

Interest in news and other information related to issues affecting the Great Lakes



[2021 phone poll question 33](#): On a scale of 1 to 5: “How interested are you in news and other information related to issues affecting the Great Lakes?” Responses: 1-not at all interested (10%); 2-not interested (6%); 3-neither interested nor uninterested (13%); 4-interested (27%); 5-very interested (38%); don’t know (6%).

Views on the current status* and trend** of the health of the lake the respondents have the greatest connection with

2021 phone poll respondents' opinions on the current status* and trend** of the environmental health and water quality of the lake the respondents reported having the greatest connection with.

	Superior	Huron	Michigan	Erie	Ontario
Status	Good (66%)	Good (63%)	Poor (38%)	Poor (37%)	Poor (36%)
Trend	Unchanging (51%)	Unchanging (52%)	Unchanging (30%) / Deteriorating (30%)	Unchanging (30%) / Deteriorating (34%)	Unchanging (31%) / Deteriorating (32%)

Views on the current trend of the health of the lake the respondents have the greatest connection with

Respondents' opinions on the trend of the environmental health and water quality of the Great Lakes overall (2015 and 2018 polls) and the lake respondents have the greatest connection with, combined (2021 phone poll).

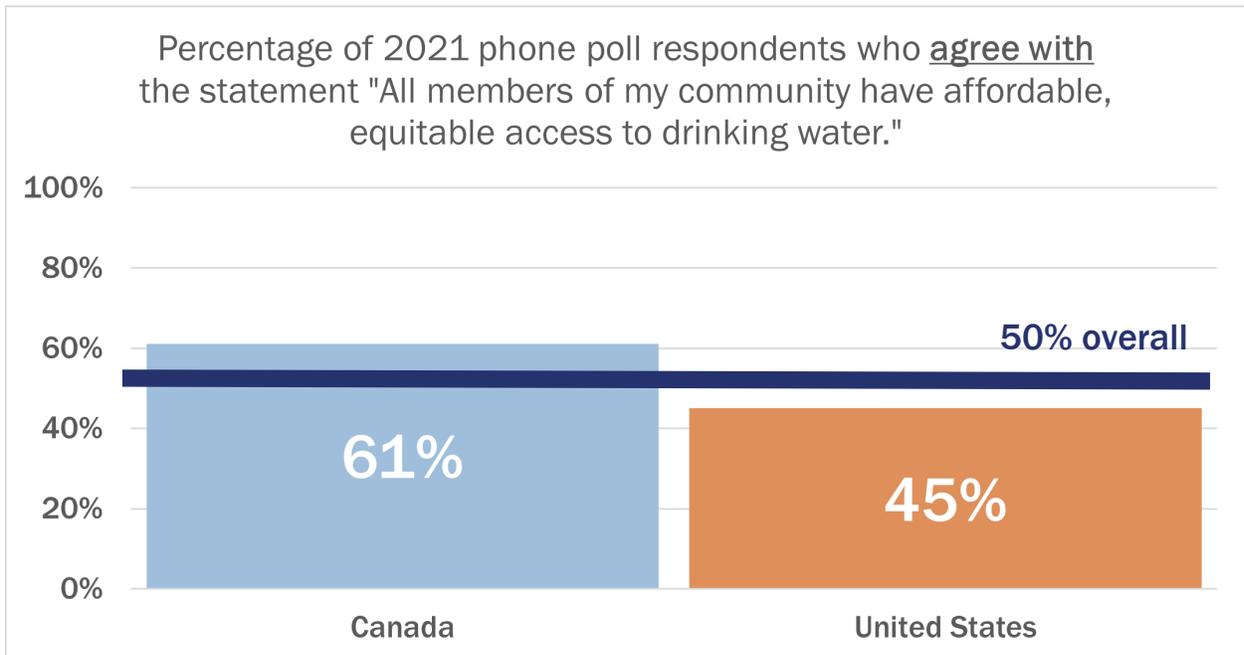
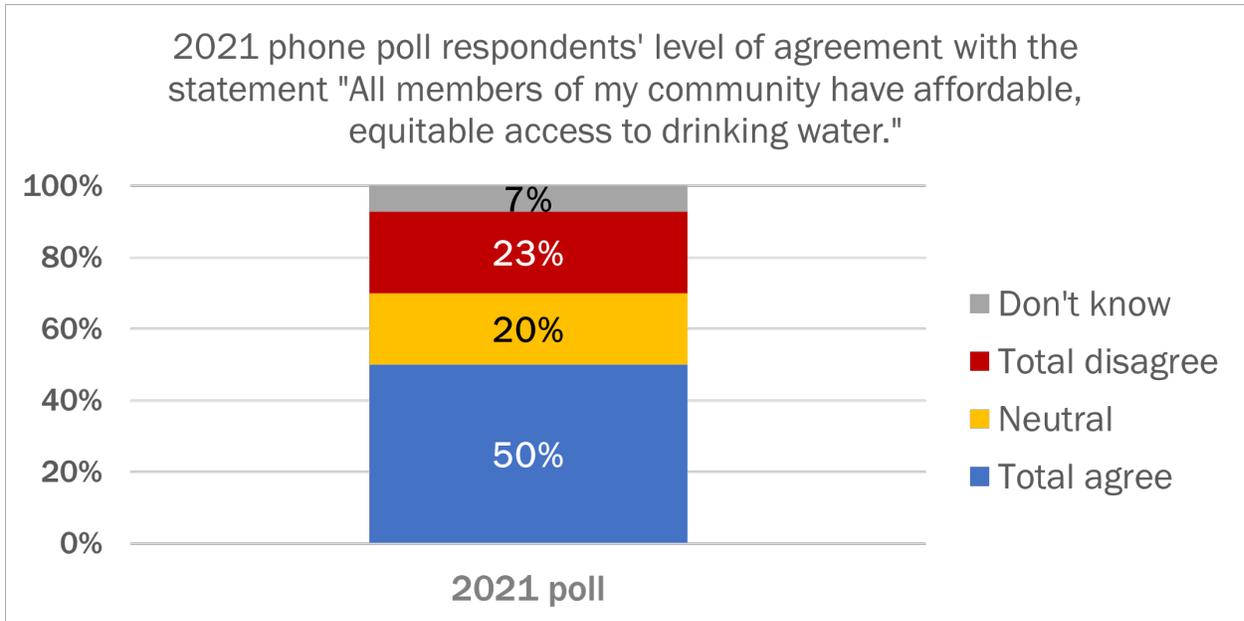


*[2021 phone poll question 3](#): How would you rate the current status of the environmental health and water quality of the lake you have the greatest connection with using a scale from one very poor to five very good?

**[2021 phone poll question 4](#): In your opinion, is the environmental health and water quality of this lake improving, deteriorating or staying about the same?

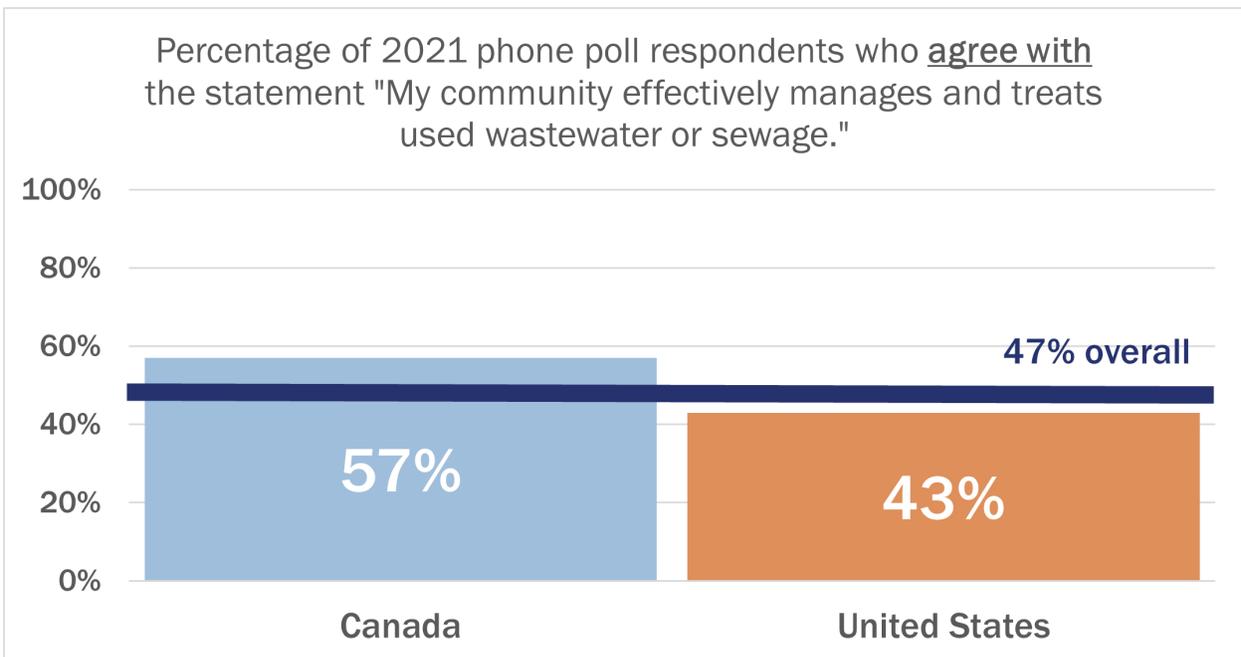
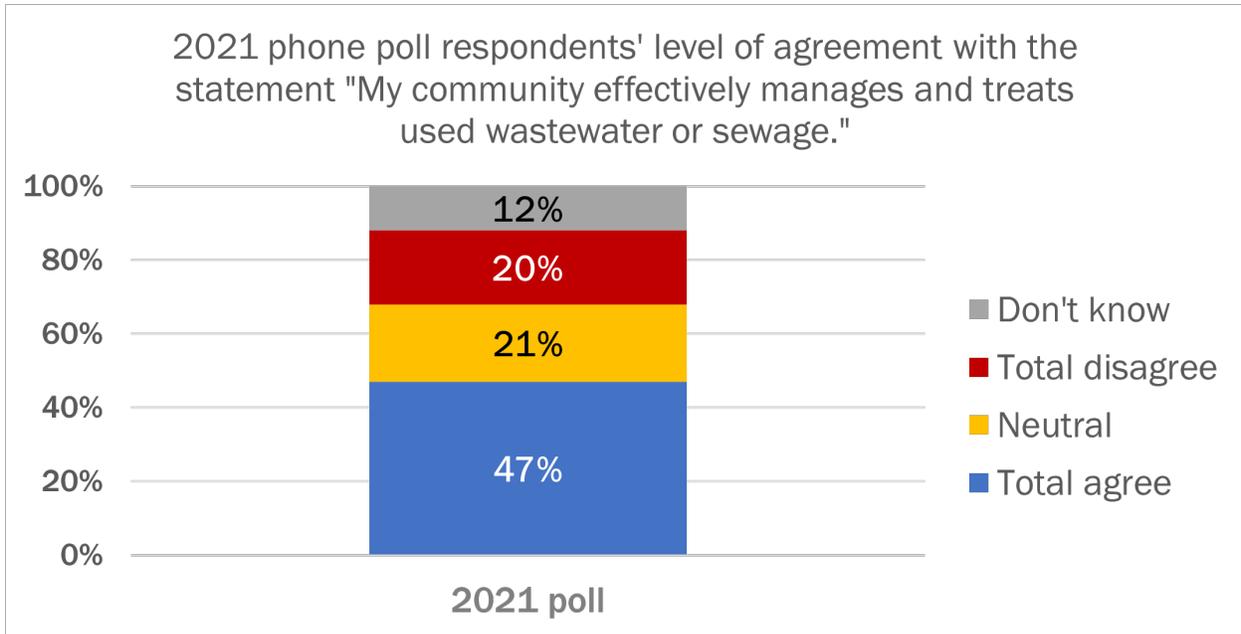
Further details comparing overall responses and Canadian/US responses are found by lake as follows: Lake Superior ([page 20](#)); Lake Huron ([page 21](#)); Lake Michigan ([page 22](#)); Lake Erie ([page 23](#)); Lake Ontario ([page 24](#)).

Does your community have affordable, equitable access to drinking water?



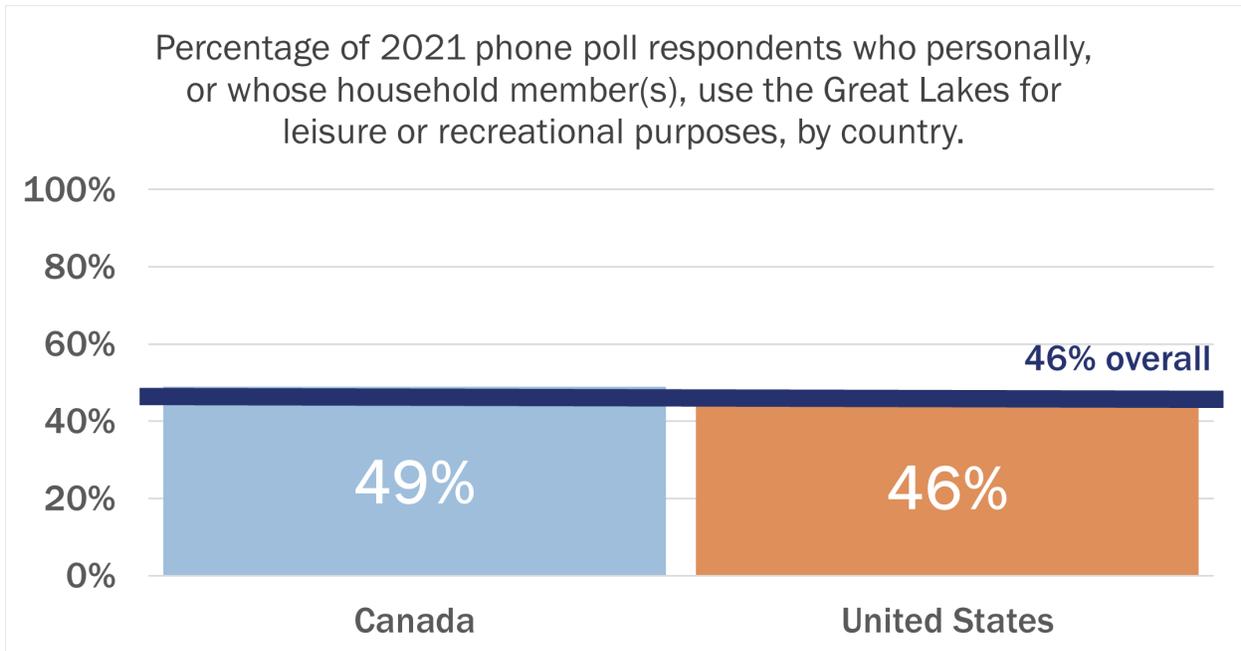
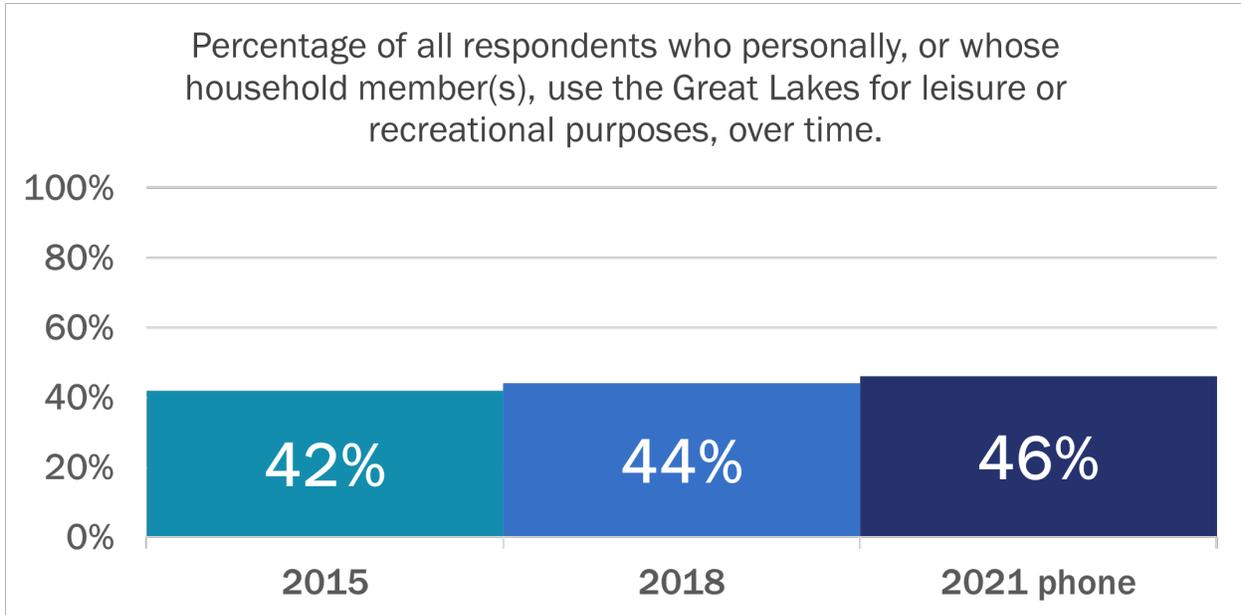
[2021 phone poll question 24b](#): On a scale of 1 to 5: "All members of my community have affordable, equitable access to drinking water." Results: 1-strongly disagree (10%); 2-disagree (13%); 3-neither agree nor disagree (20%); 4-agree (30%); 5-strongly agree (20%); don't know (7%).

Does your community effectively manage and treat used wastewater or sewage?



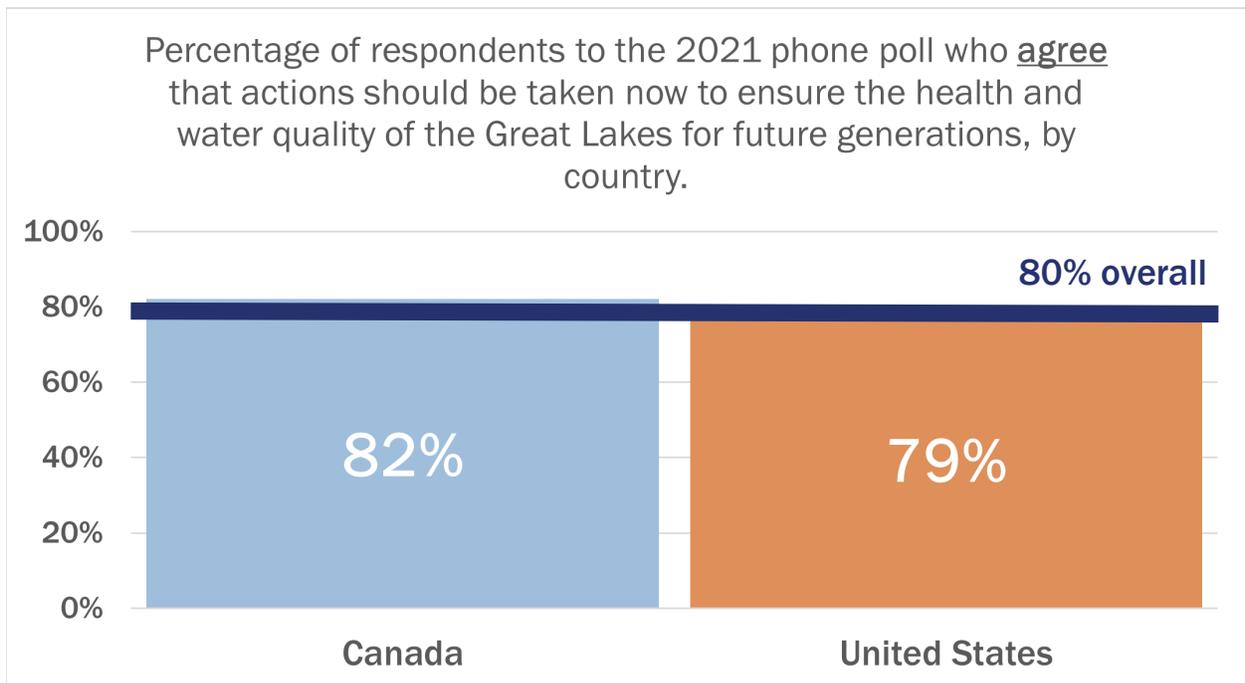
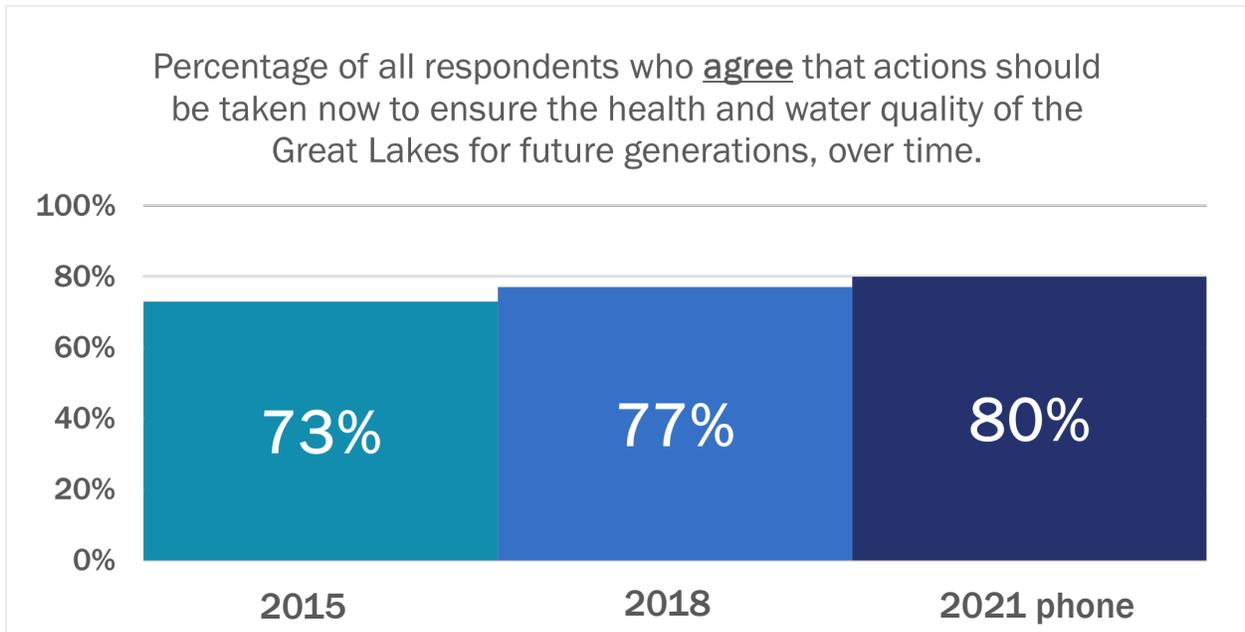
[2021 phone poll question 24c](#): On a scale of 1 to 5: "My community effectively manages and treats used wastewater or sewage." Results: 1-strongly disagree (9%); 2-disagree (11%); 3-neither agree nor disagree (21%); 4-agree (28%); 5-strongly agree (19%); don't know (12%).

Use of the Great Lakes for leisure or recreation



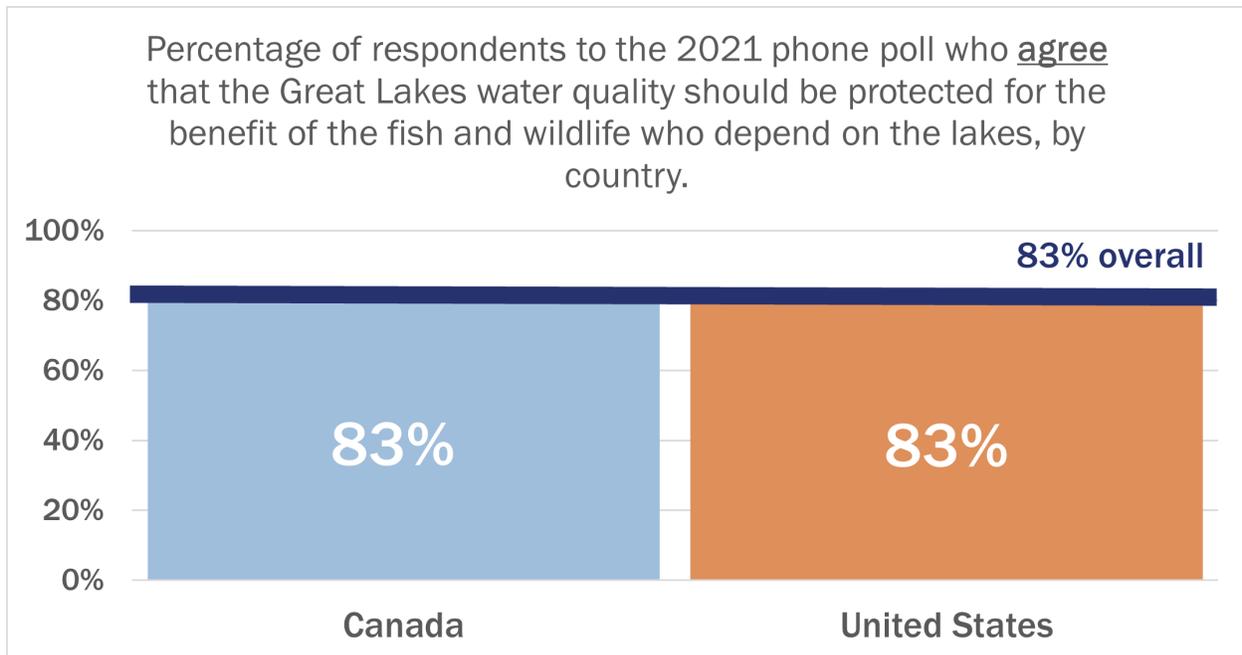
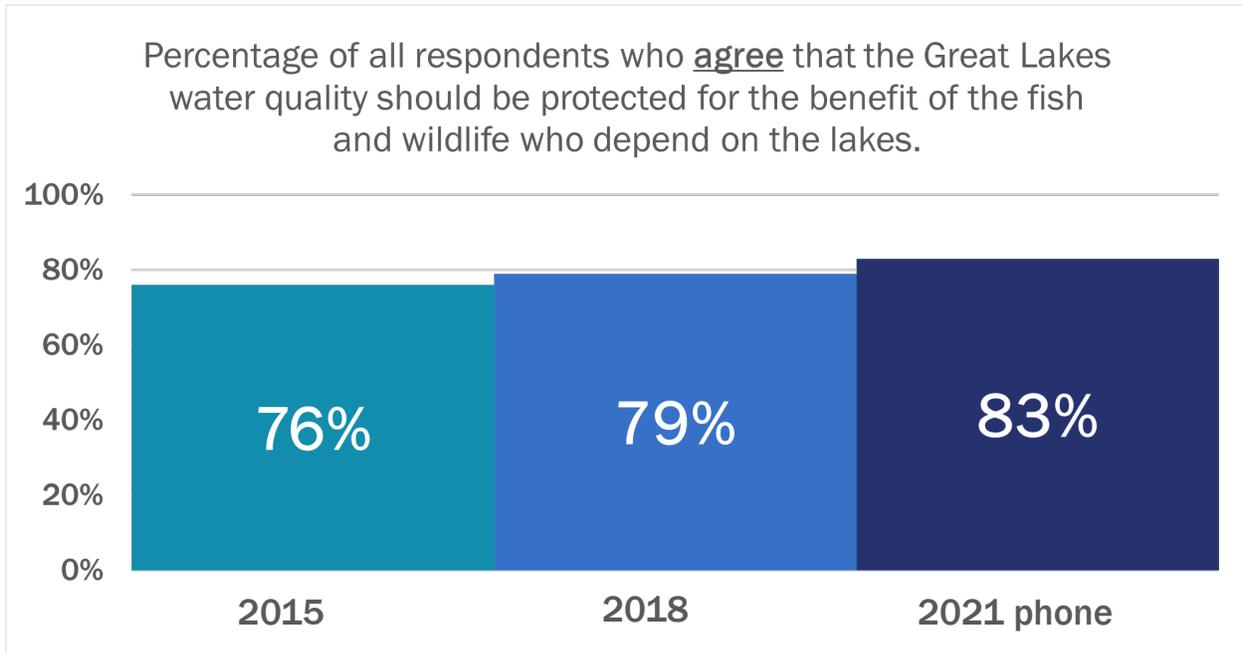
[2021 phone poll question 28](#): “Do you or any members of your household use the Great Lakes for leisure or recreational purposes?” Results: yes (46%); no (54%); don’t know (0%).

Belief that actions should be taken now to ensure the health and water quality of the Great Lakes for future generations



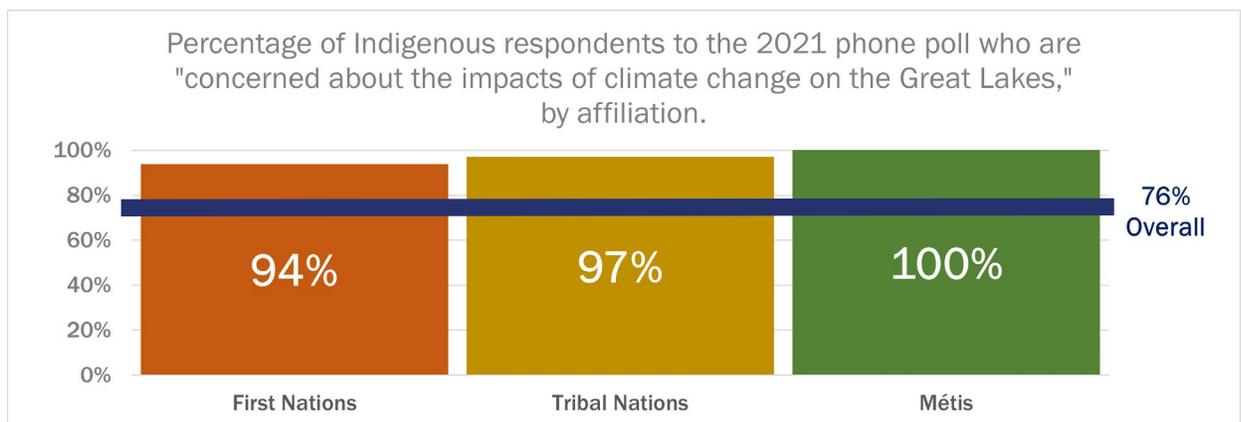
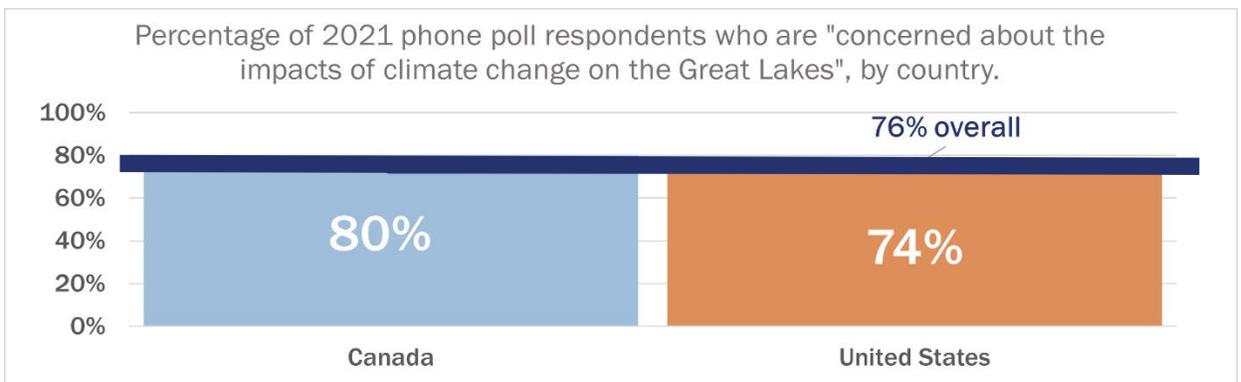
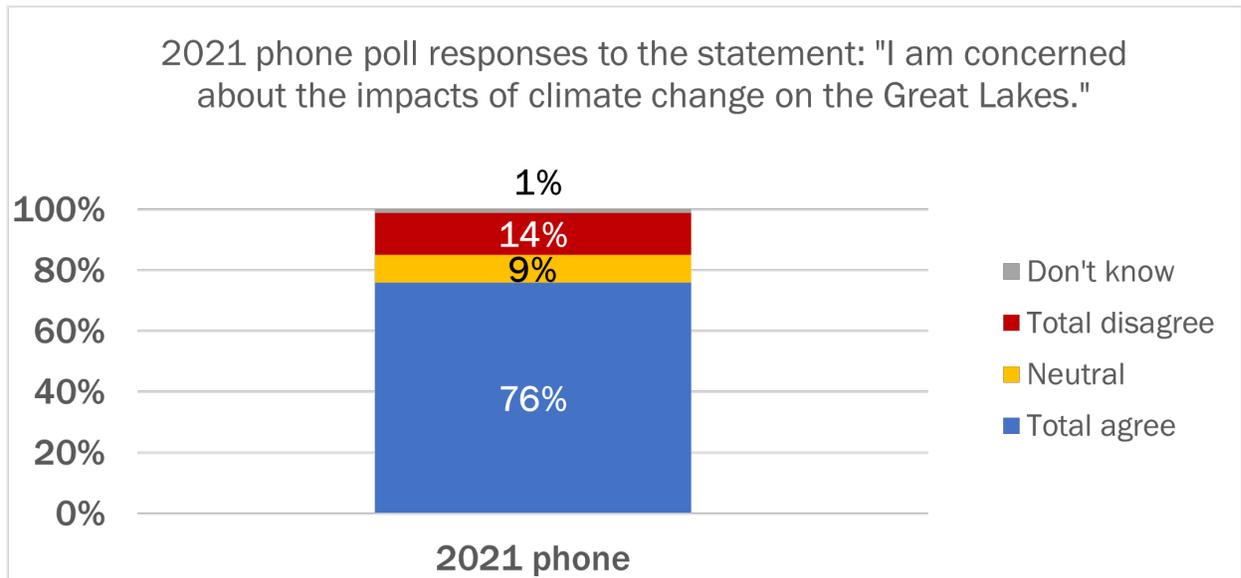
[2021 phone poll question 42](#): On a scale of 1 to 5 rank your agreement with the statement: “Actions should be taken now to ensure the health and water quality of the Great Lakes for future generations.” Results: 1-strongly disagree (1%); 2-disagree (1%); 3-neither agree nor disagree (8%); 4-agree (12%); 5-strongly agree (68%); don’t know (10%).

Belief that water quality should be protected for the benefit of fish and wildlife



[2021 phone poll question 45](#): On a scale of 1 to 5 rank your agreement with the statement: “The Great Lakes water quality should be protected for the benefit of the fish and wildlife who depend on the lakes.” Results: 1-strongly disagree (2%); 2-disagree (2%); 3-neither agree nor disagree (4%); 4-agree (15%); 5-strongly agree (68%); don’t know (9%).

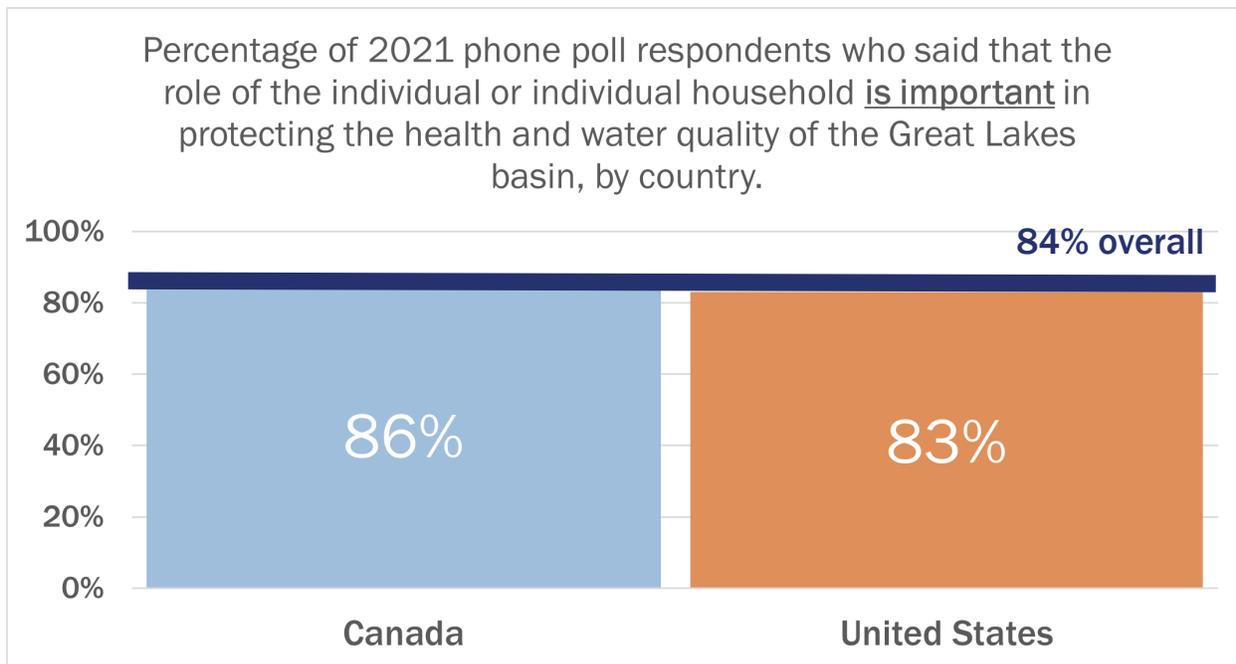
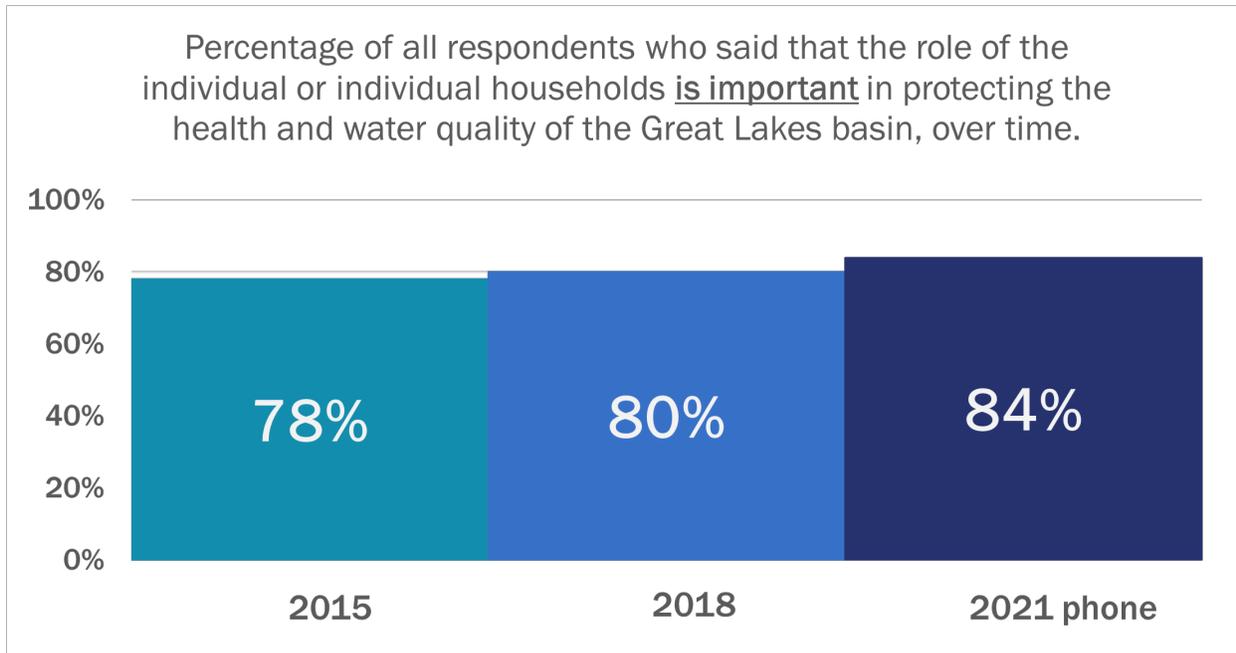
Concern about the impacts of climate change on the Great Lakes



[2021 phone poll question 50](#): On a scale of 1 to 5 rank your agreement with the statement: "I am concerned about the impacts of climate change on the health and water quality of the Great Lakes." Results: 1-strongly disagree (5%); 2-disagree (9%); 3-neither agree nor disagree (9%); 4-agree (30%); 5-strongly agree (45%); don't know (1%).

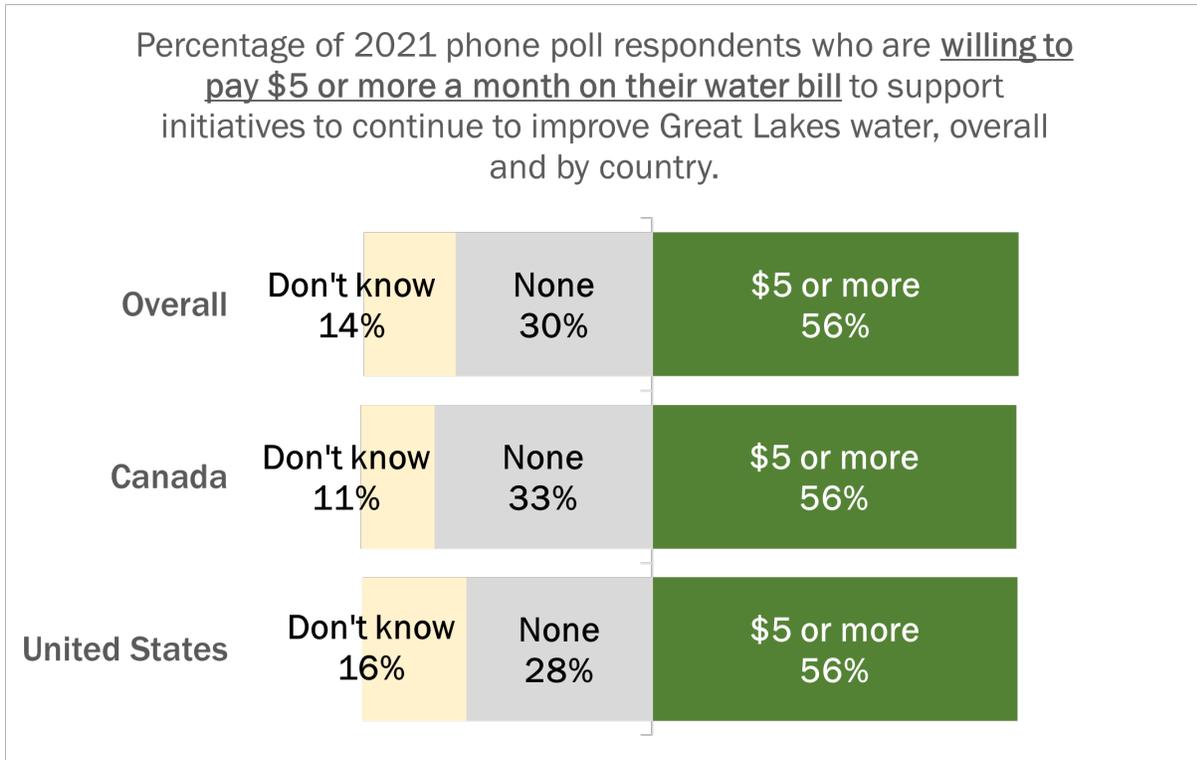
Consider exploring the Great Lakes Water Quality Board's [companion briefing booklet](#) comparing the responses of First Nations, Tribal Nations and Métis residents for a similar subset of 2021 poll questions.

Importance of the role of the individual or individual household in protecting the Great Lakes



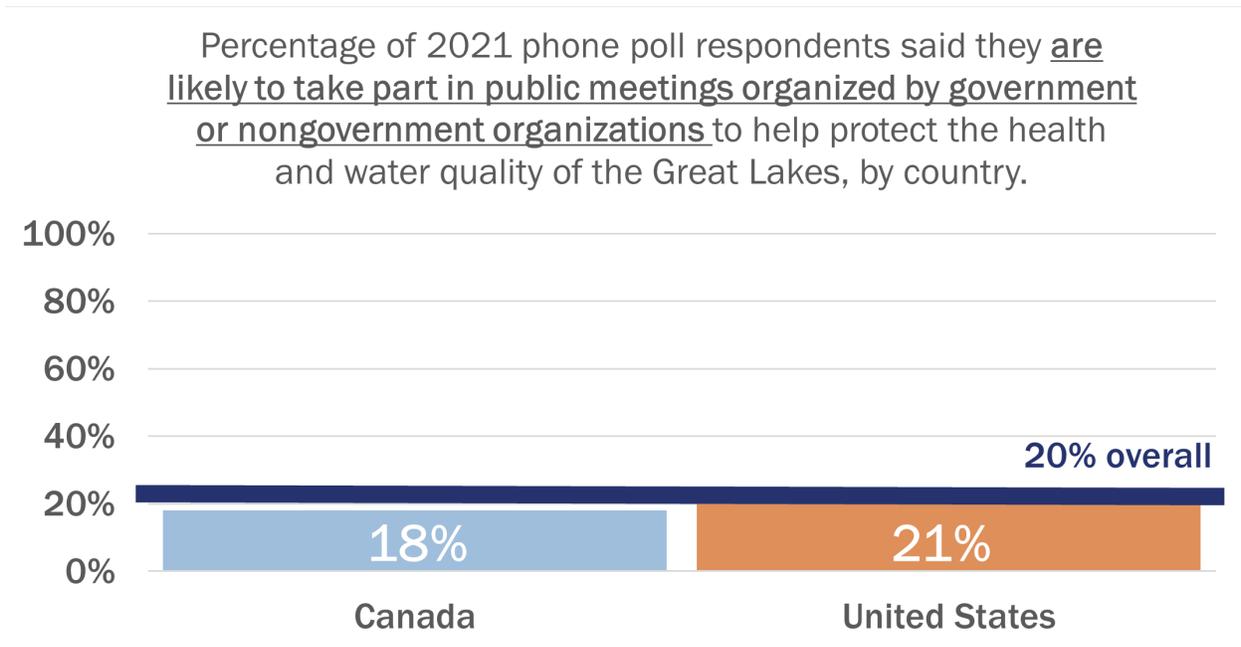
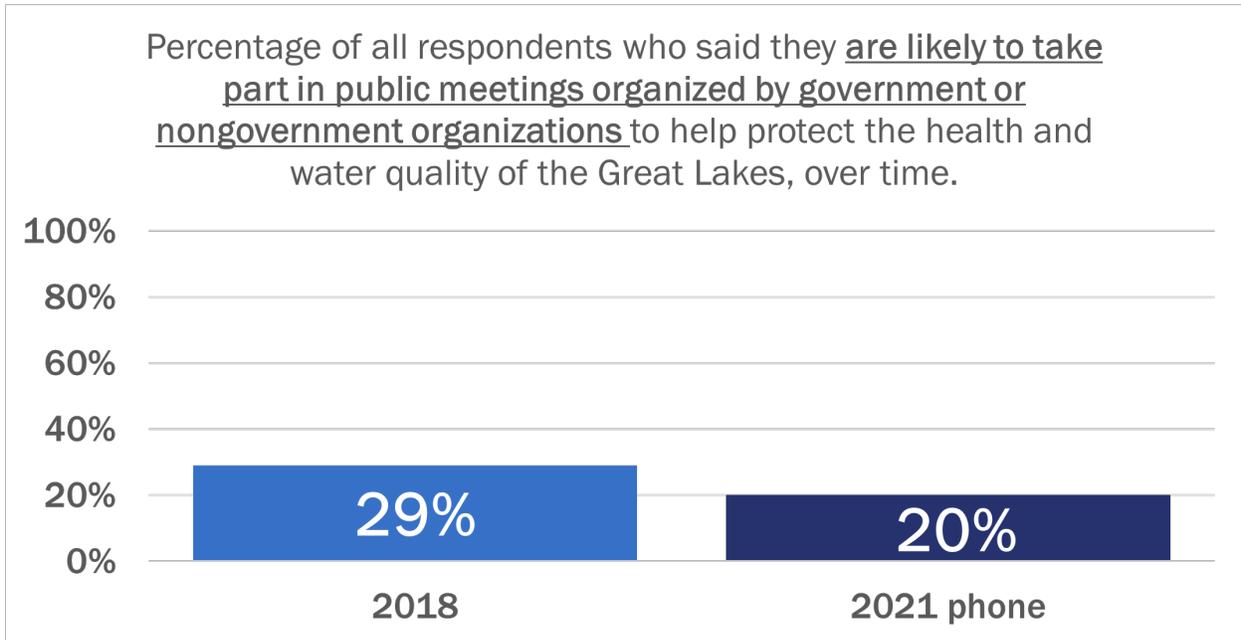
[2021 phone poll question 14](#): On a scale of 1 to 5: “How important is the role of the individual or individual household in protecting the health and water quality of the Great Lakes basin?” Results: 1-not at all important (3%); 2-not important (5%); 3-neither important nor unimportant (4%); 4-important (19%); 5-very important (66%); don’t know (4%).

Willingness to pay more on their monthly water bill for Great Lakes water quality initiatives



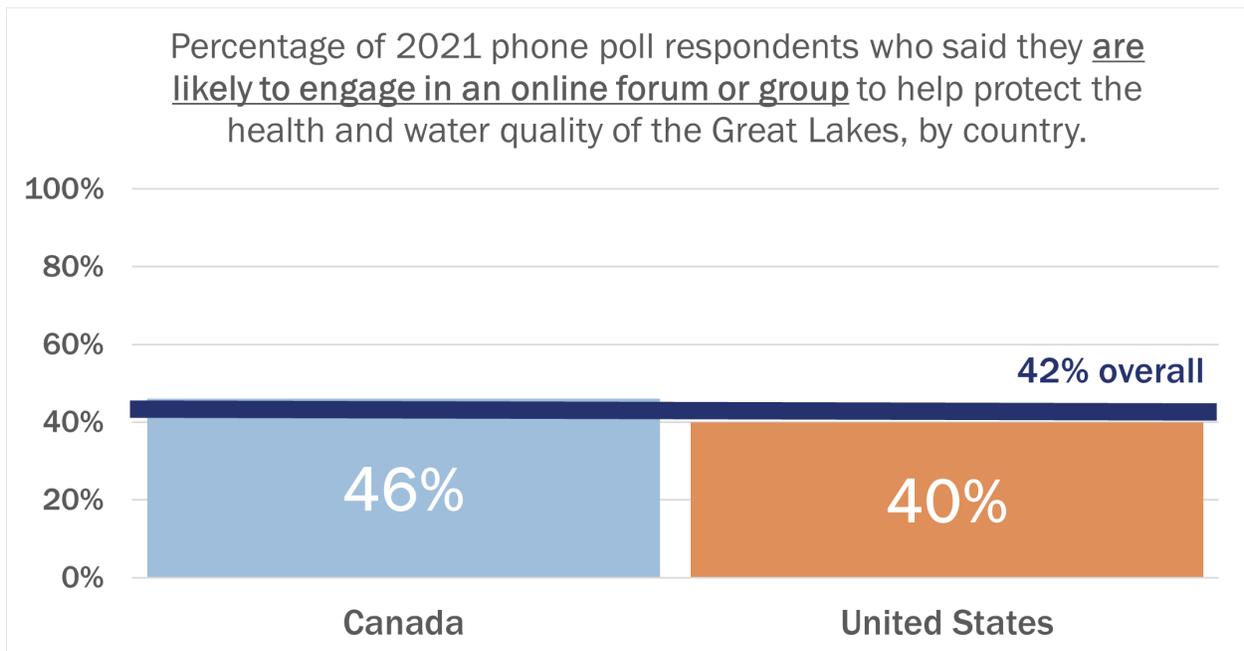
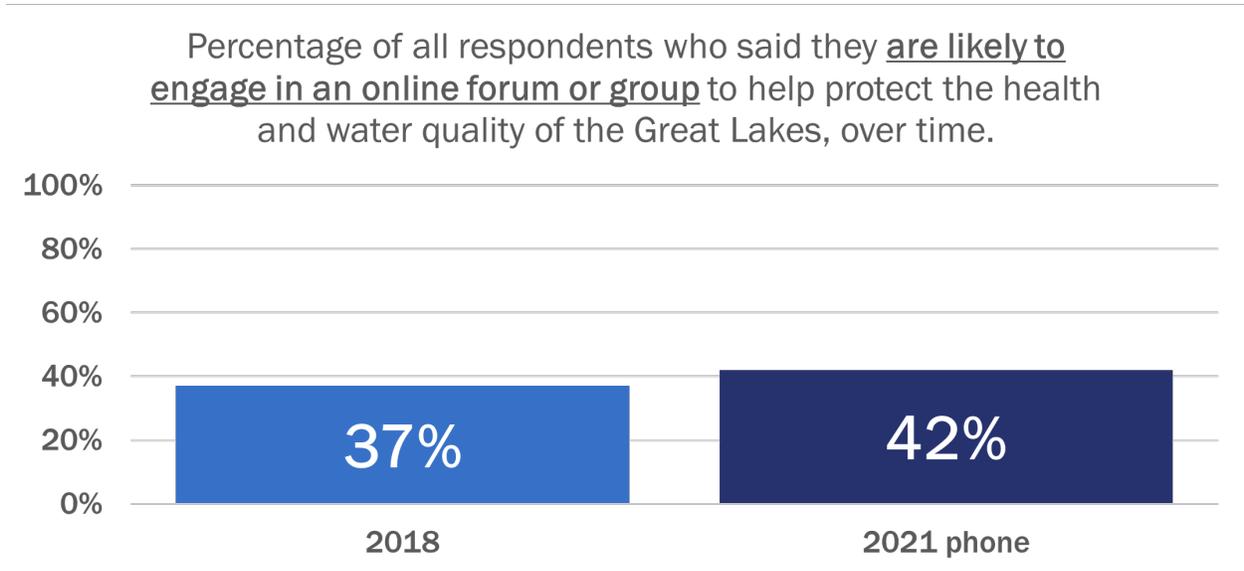
[2021 phone poll question 27](#): “In order to support initiatives to continue to improve water quality and undertake community efforts to work towards swimmable, fishable, drinkable waters in the Great Lakes, would you be willing to pay <\$> a month on your water bill?” Results: none (30%); \$5 (15%); \$10 (16%); \$25 or more (25%); don’t know (14%).

Likelihood to take part in public meetings to help protect the Great Lakes



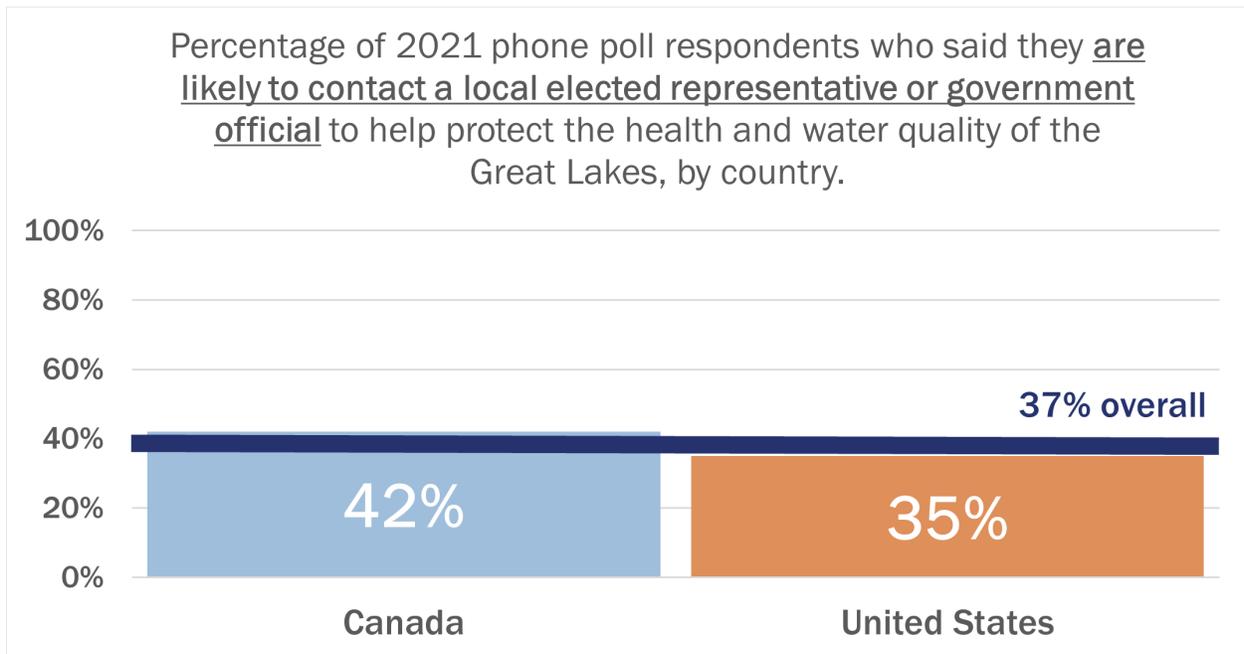
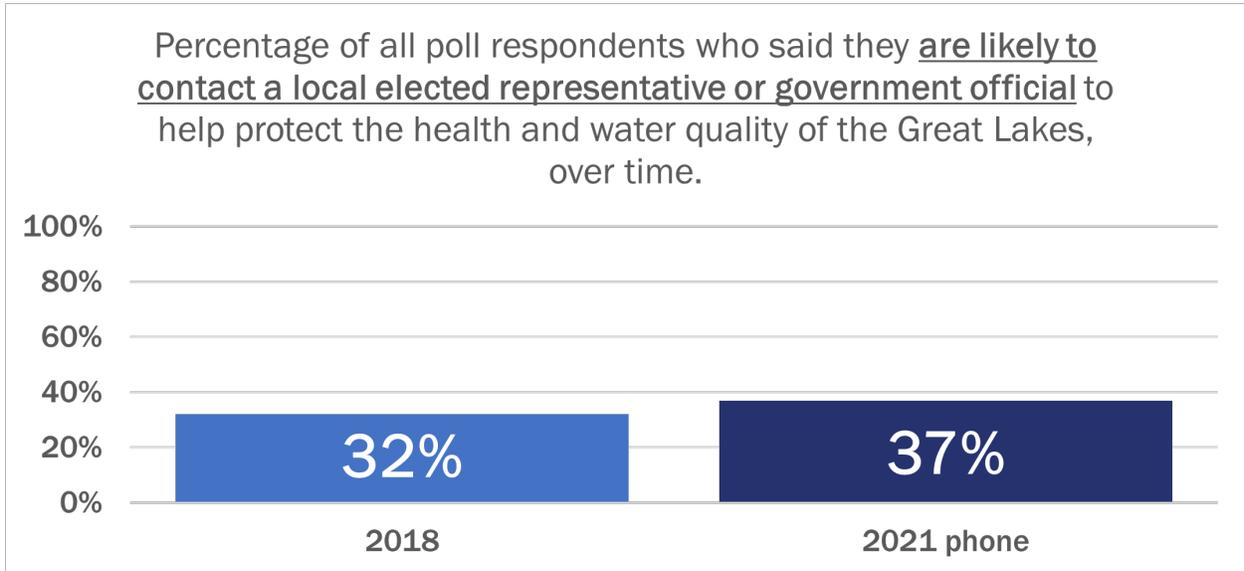
[2021 phone poll question 15a](#): “Which of the following actions would you be likely to take part in to help protect the water quality of the Great Lakes? a) Attend a public meeting organized by government or nongovernment organizations?” Results: yes (20%); no (80%); don’t know (0%).

Likelihood to engage in an online forum or group to help protect the Great Lakes



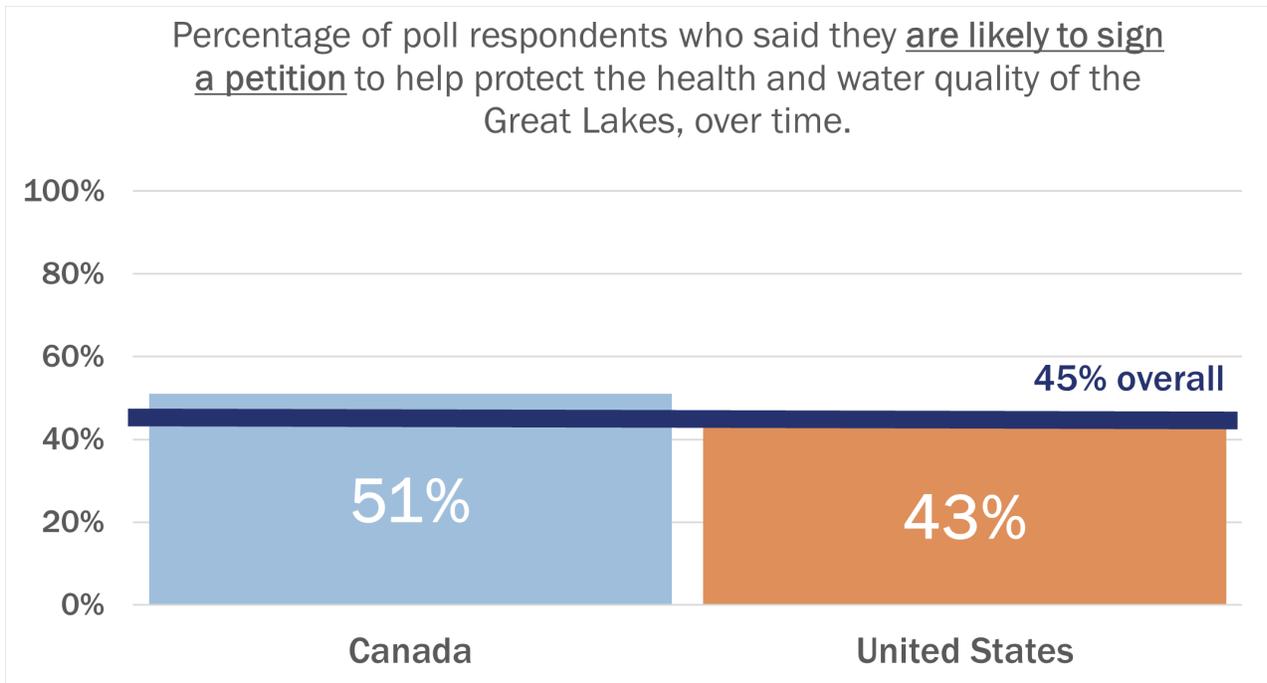
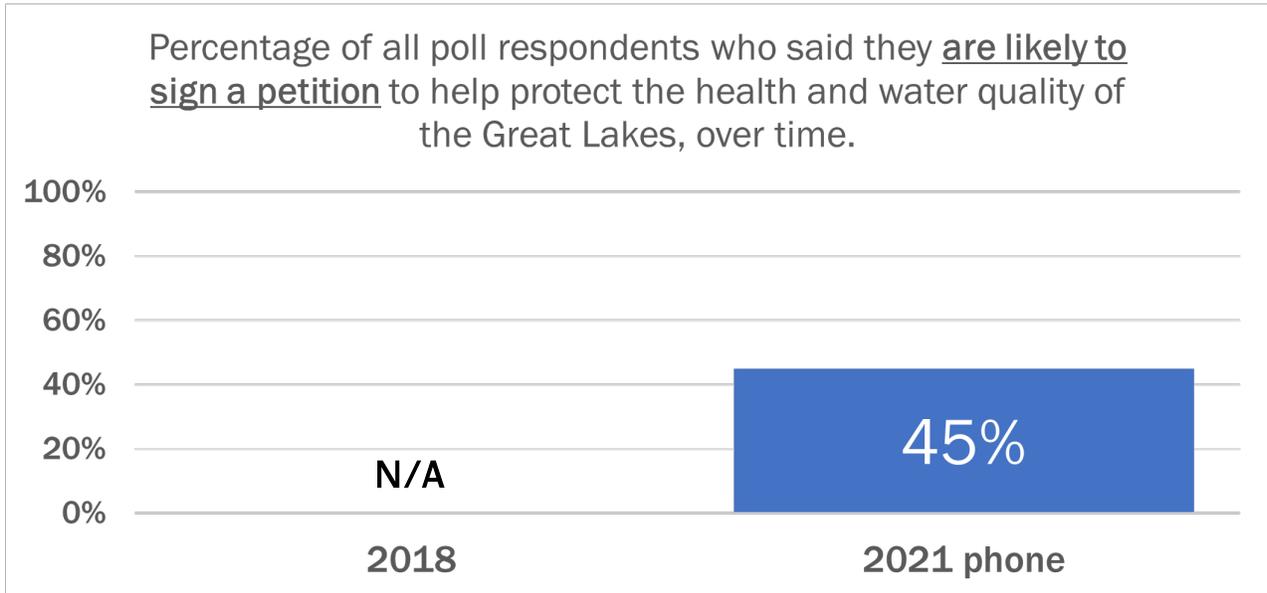
[2021 phone poll question 15b](#): “Which of the following actions would you be likely to take part in to help protect the water quality of the Great Lakes? b) Attend a public meeting organized by government or nongovernment organizations?” Results: yes (42%); no (58%); don’t know (0%).

Likelihood to contact a local elected representative or government official to help protect the Great Lakes



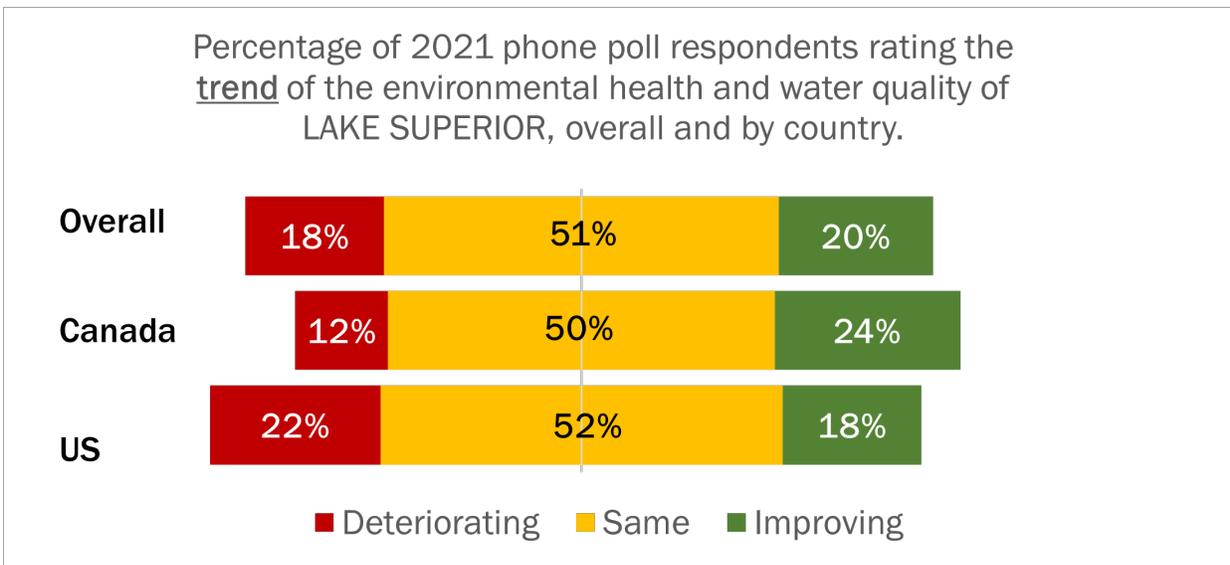
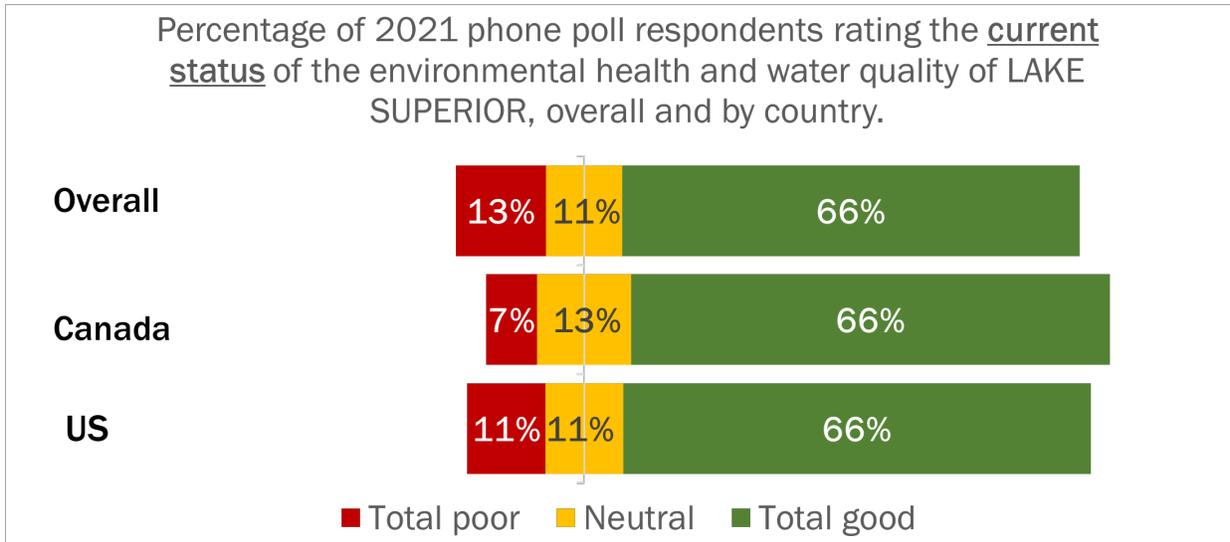
[2021 phone poll question 15c](#): “Which of the following actions would you be likely to take part in to help protect the water quality of the Great Lakes? c) Attend a public meeting organized by government or nongovernment organizations?” Results: yes (37%); no (63%); don’t know (0%).

Likelihood to sign a petition to help protect the Great Lakes



[2021 phone poll question 15j](#): “Which of the following actions would you be likely to take part in to help protect the water quality of the Great Lakes? j) Sign a petition?” Results: yes 45%); no (55%); don’t know (0%).

Views on the current status and trend of Lake Superior's water quality

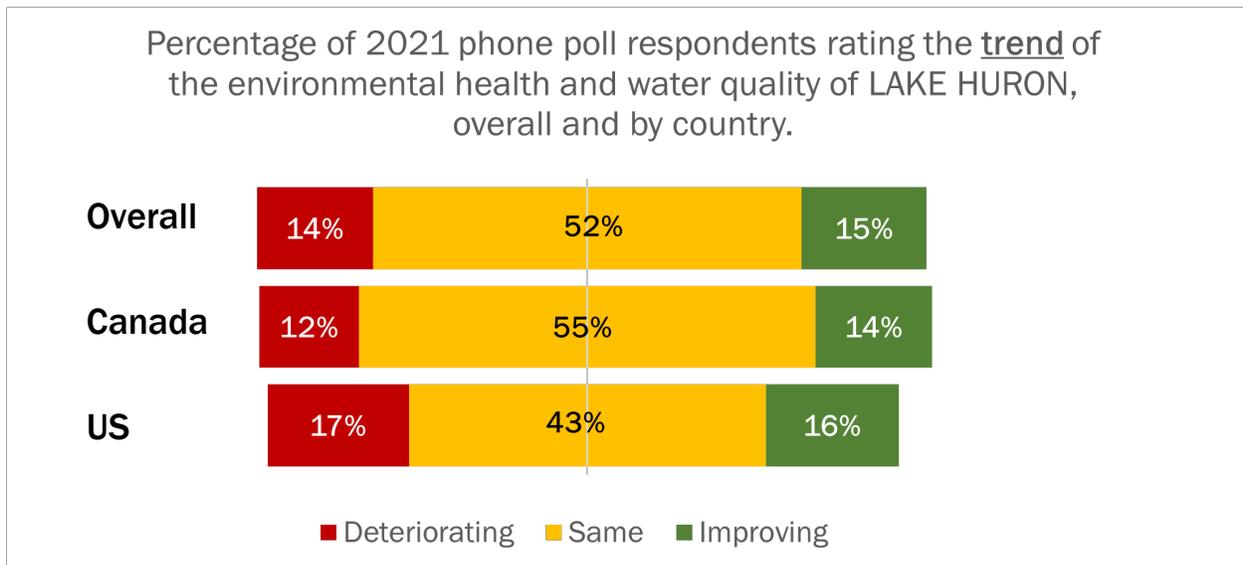
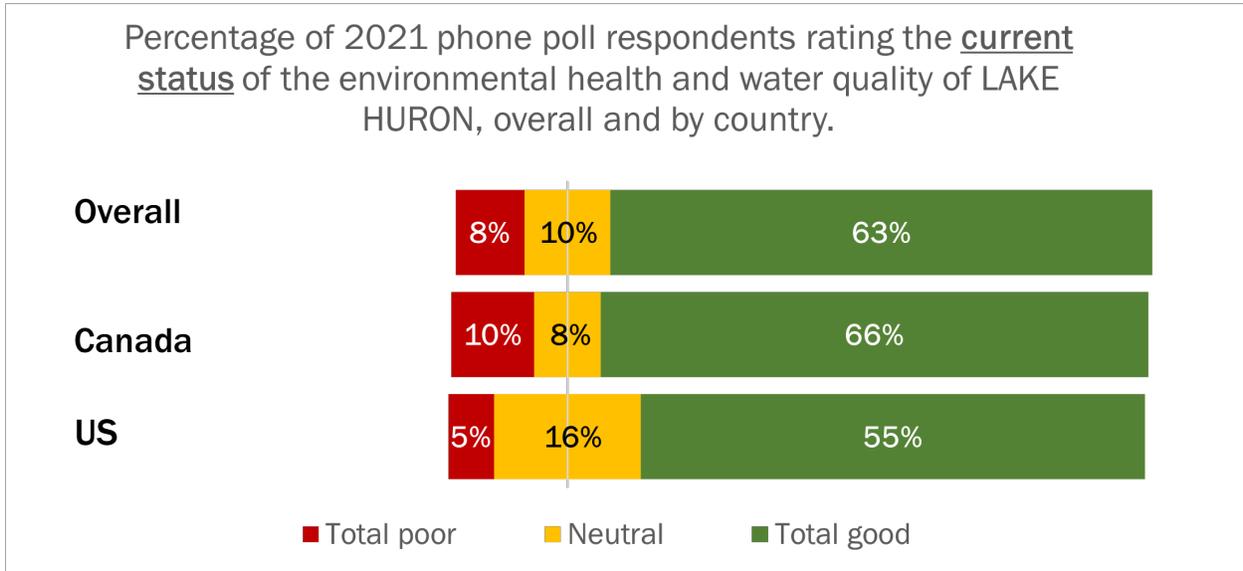


Results: 328 respondents have the greatest connection with Lake Superior; Canada (36%) and US (64%).

[2021 phone poll question 3](#): “How would you rate the current status of the environmental health and water quality of the lake you have the greatest connection with?” In addition to the above results: overall don’t know (12%); Canadian don’t know (14%); US don’t know (10%).

[2021 phone poll question 4](#): “In your opinion, is the environmental health and water quality of this lake improving, deteriorating or staying about the same?” In addition to the above results: overall don’t know (11%); Canadian don’t know (14%); US don’t know (9%).

Views on the current status and trend of Lake Huron’s water quality

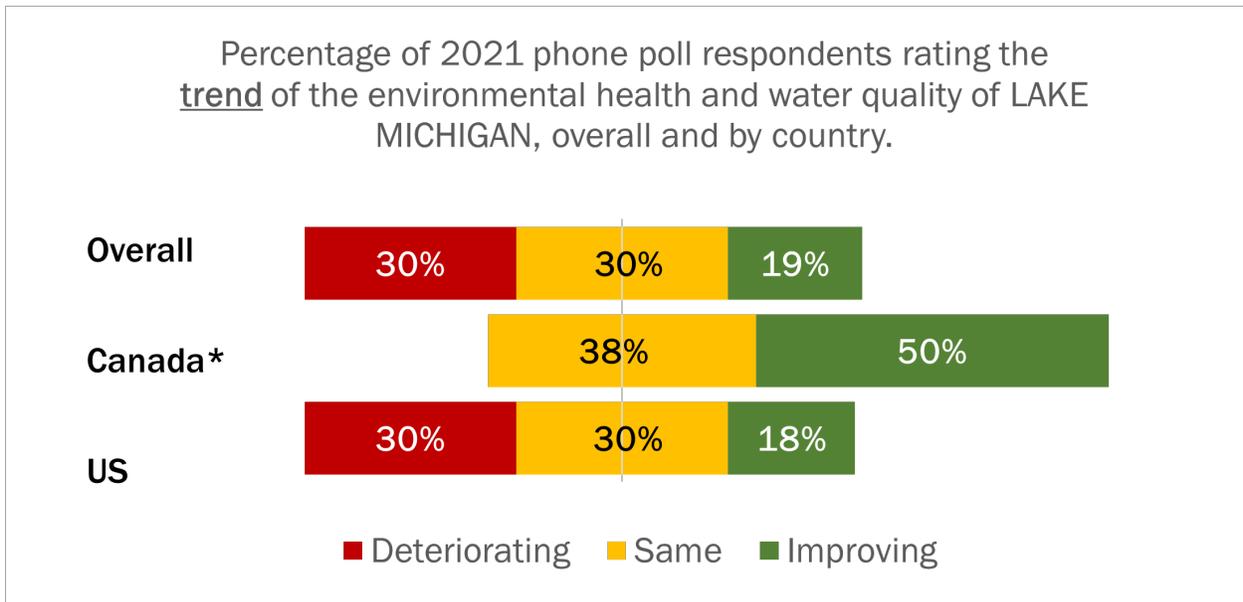
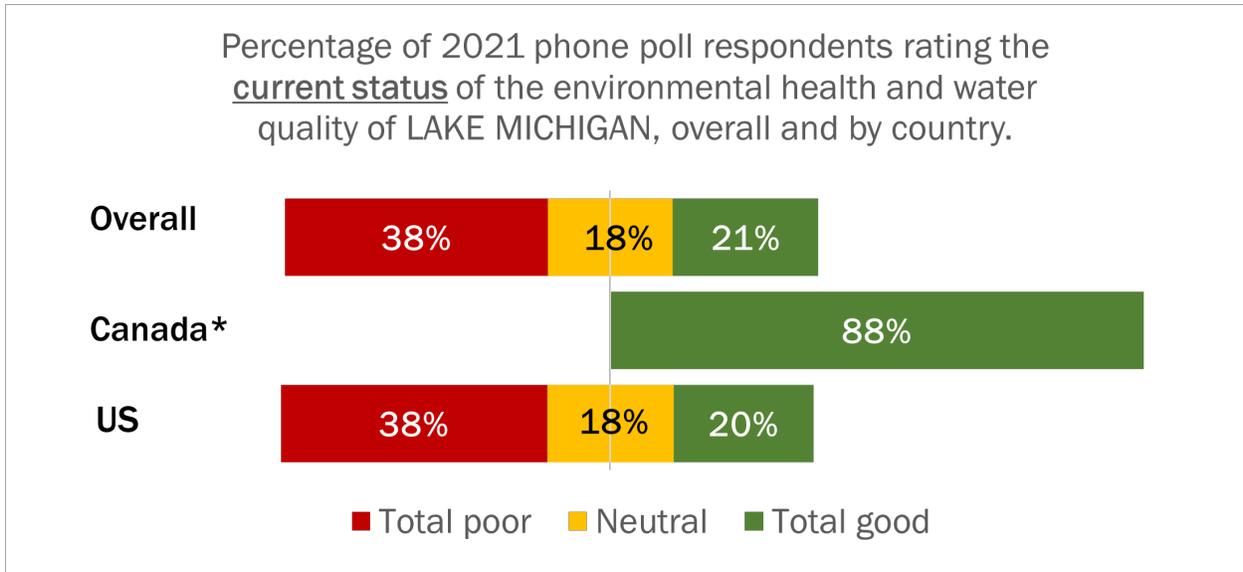


Results: 254 respondents have the greatest connection with Lake Huron; Canada (70%) and US (30%).

[2021 phone poll question 3](#): “How would you rate the current status of the environmental health and water quality of the lake you have the greatest connection with?” In addition to the above results: overall don’t know (19%); Canadian don’t know (16%); US don’t know (25%).

[2021 phone poll question 4](#): “In your opinion, is the environmental health and water quality of this lake improving, deteriorating or staying about the same?” In addition to the above results: overall don’t know (20%); Canadian don’t know (18%); US don’t know (25%).

Views on the current status and trend of Lake Michigan’s water quality

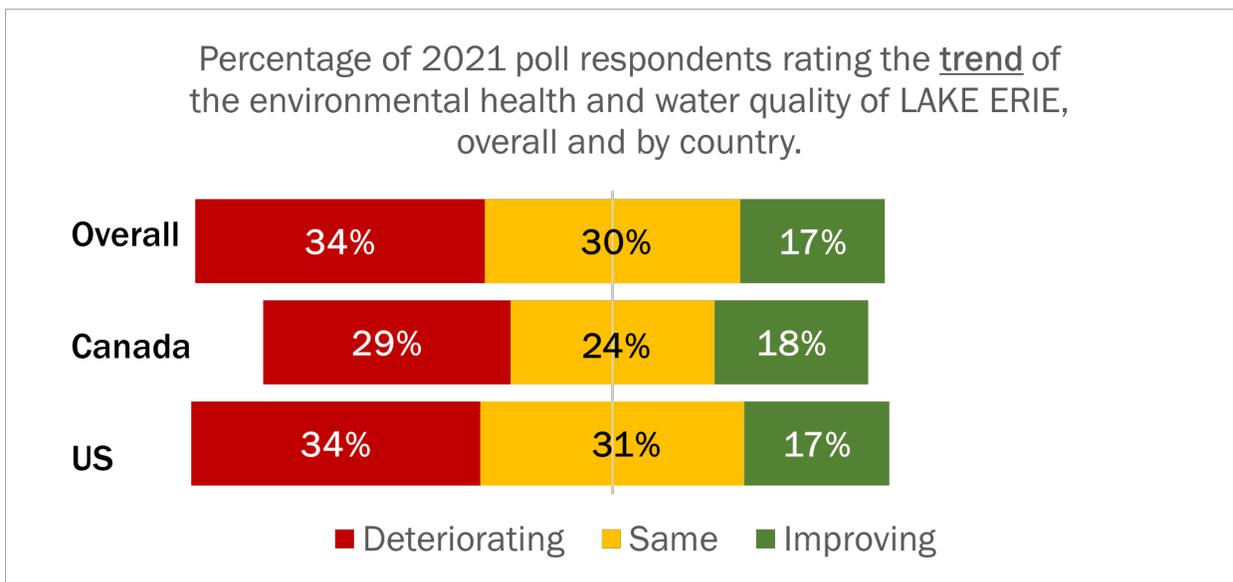
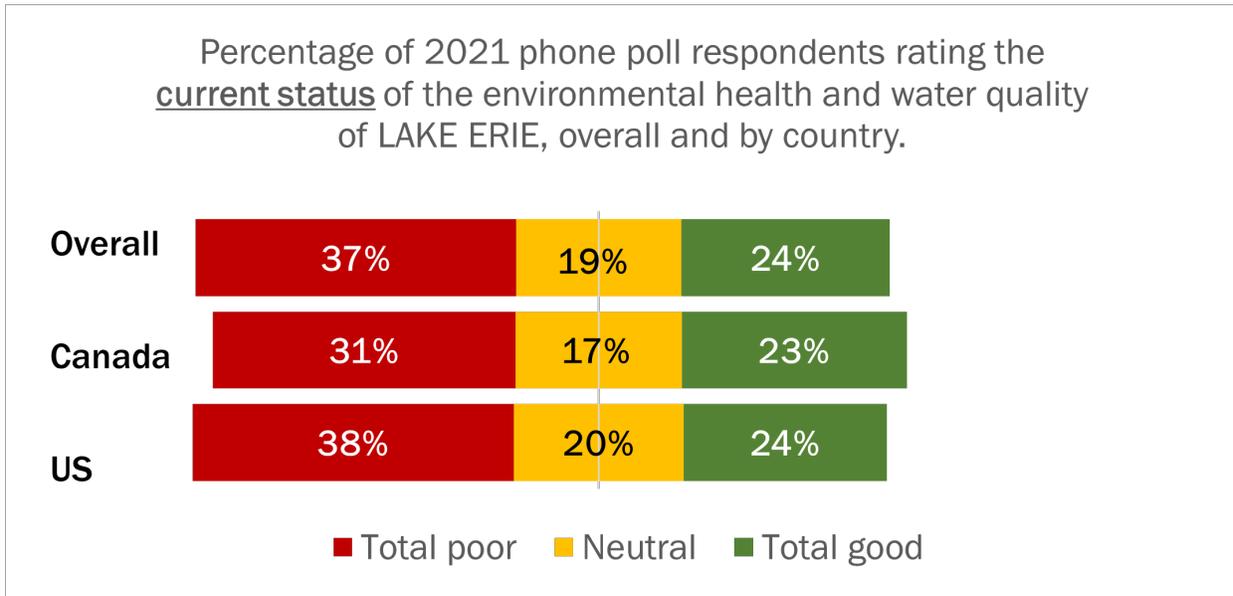


*Note that Lake Michigan is solely in the United States. Results: 1135 respondents have the greatest connection with Lake Michigan; Canada (1%) and US (99%), thus explaining the skew in the Canadian/US results.

[2021 phone poll question 3](#): “How would you rate the current status of the environmental health and water quality of the lake you have the greatest connection with?” In addition to the above results: overall don’t know (23%); Canadian don’t know (13%); US don’t know (23%).

[2021 phone poll question 4](#): “In your opinion, is the environmental health and water quality of this lake improving, deteriorating or staying about the same?” In addition to the above results: overall don’t know (21%); Canadian don’t know (13%); US don’t know (22%).

Views on the current status and trend of Lake Erie’s water quality



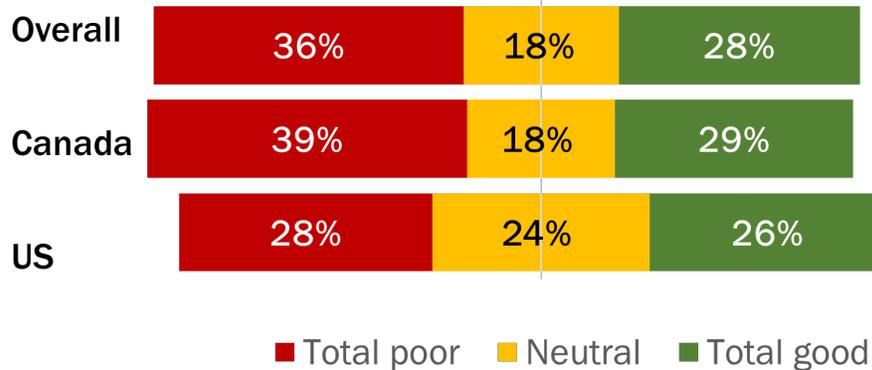
Results: 1684 respondents have the greatest connection with Lake Erie; Canada (13%) and US (87%).

[2021 phone poll question 3](#): “How would you rate the current status of the environmental health and water quality of the lake you have the greatest connection with?” In addition to the above results: overall don’t know (20%); Canadian don’t know (29%); US don’t know (18%).

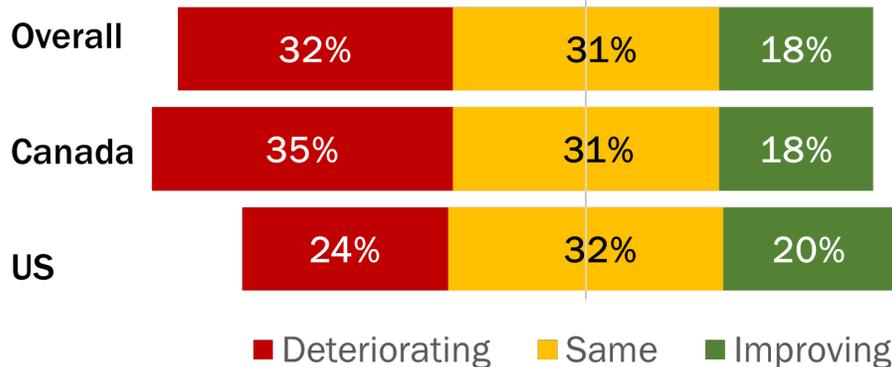
[2021 phone poll question 4](#): “In your opinion, is the environmental health and water quality of this lake improving, deteriorating or staying about the same?” In addition to the above results: overall don’t know (20%); Canadian don’t know (29%); US don’t know (18%).

Views on the current status and trend of Lake Ontario's water quality

Percentage of 2021 phone poll respondents rating the current status of the environmental health and water quality of LAKE ONTARIO, overall and by country.



Percentage of 2021 phone poll respondents rating the trend of the environmental health and water quality of LAKE ONTARIO, overall and by country.



Results: 1024 respondents have the greatest connection with Lake Ontario; Canada (77%) and US (23%).

[2021 phone poll question 3](#): “How would you rate the current status of the environmental health and water quality of the lake you have the greatest connection with?” In addition to the above results: overall don’t know (18%); Canadian don’t know (15%); US don’t know (23%).

[2021 phone poll question 4](#): “In your opinion, is the environmental health and water quality of this lake improving, deteriorating or staying about the same?” In addition to the above results: overall don’t know (19%); Canadian don’t know (17%); US don’t know (24%).

Additional information

About the International Joint Commission Great Lakes Water Quality Board

The International Joint Commission was established by the [Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909](#) to help the governments of Canada and the United States prevent and resolve disputes over use of the waters shared by the two countries.

The IJC's [Great Lakes Water Quality Board](#) is the principal advisor to the IJC under the [2012 Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement](#). The board assists the IJC by reviewing and assessing progress by the governments of Canada and the United States to implement the Agreement, identifying emerging issues and recommending strategies and approaches to prevent and resolve complex challenges facing the Great Lakes, and providing advice on the role of relevant jurisdictions to implement these strategies and approaches.

Relevant web links and resources

- 2021 Great Lakes Regional Poll: results reports, media toolkit, informational webinar video and more
 - ijc.org/wqb/great-lakes-poll
- 2018 Great Lakes Regional Poll (née Great Lakes Binational Poll)
 - ijc.org/en/wqb/second-binational-great-lakes-basin-poll
- 2015 Great Lakes Regional Poll (née Great Lakes Binational Poll)
 - ijc.org/en/wqb/2015-binational-great-lakes-basin-poll
- 2021 Great Lakes Regional Poll First Nations, Métis and Tribal Nation Results Comparison Decision-Maker Briefing Booklet
 - ijc.org/sites/default/files/WQB_2021_Great_Lakes_Regional_Poll_Indigenous_BriefingBooklet.pdf
- About the IJC Great Lakes Water Quality Board
 - ijc.org/wqb
- About the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement
 - ijc.org/en/what/glwq

For additional information or the opportunity to receive further briefing from the International Joint Commission Great Lakes Water Quality Board, please contact:

*International Joint Commission Great Lakes Regional Office
100 Ouellette Ave., 8th Floor Windsor, Ontario, N9A 6T3, Canada
US Mailing Address: P.O. Box 32869, Detroit, Michigan, 48232, USA
Phone: 519-257-6713
Fax: 519-257-6740
commission@ijc.org*

Suggested citation: Maria Greco, Allison Voglesong Zejnati, Carolyn Johns, Rajesh Bejankiwar. 2021 Great Lakes Regional Poll Canadian/US Results Comparison Decision-Maker Briefing Booklet. International Joint Commission Great Lakes Water Quality Board Engagement Work Group.
ijc.org/sites/default/files/WQB_2021_Great_Lakes_Regional_Poll_US-CAN_BriefingBooklet.pdf.