# WILDFIRE RISK PERCEPTION AND PREPAREDNESS AMONG WHISTLER RESIDENTS

# **PARTICIPANTS' PROFILE**

Attributes	Percentage of Participants
Male	49%
Female	49%
Aged 65 & above	39%
Aged 45 & above	85%
Net earning of \$70,000 or more annually	58%
Have postsecondary education	89%
Permanently resident in Whistler	85%
Fully or partly own their residence	90%
Live in a property aged 21 years and above	64%



live in detached houses, 18% in semi-detached, & 11% in rowtownhouses



have lived in current property for 5-14 yrs, 25% for less than 5 years



reported having fire insurance, 16% not sure of coverage, 4% not insured



have never been evacuated or placed on evacuation alert due to wildfires

### PERCEIVED WILDFIRE RISK

9 in 10



'concerned' or 'very concerned' about wildfires in Whistler



perceived wildfire risk to Whistler as 'high' or 'extreme' 64%

perceived the risk of wildfire to their property as 'high' or 'extreme' 84%

'agree' or 'strongly agree' that threat to their property is significant enough to warrant mitigative actions

# WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS (%)

46% feel 'moderately prepared' for a possible future fire, 23% feel 'prepared' or 'very prepared'



49% feel their community is 'moderately prepared' for a possible future fire, 16% feel their community is 'prepared' or very 'prepared'

If evacuated, I have a place to go aside from the emergency shelter

I have a grab-and-go bag ready in case of an evacuation

I know where in the community to find information during an emergency

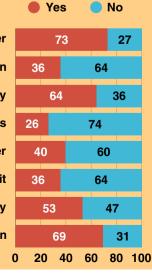
I have a fireproof safe for valuables

My household has a plan in place in case of an evacuation order

If I have a suggestion on wildfire management, I know where to provide it

I am aware of the wildfire management process in my community

I have healthcare coverage in addition to the provincial healthcare plan



This infographic is the first in a 3-part series and a product of academic research involving a survey conducted in Whistler between April and October 2024. The survey, which was systematically conducted to cover all of Whistler's neighbourhoods, received 234 responses, although not every question was answered by every respondent. The research was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada. For more information on wildfire management in Whistler, visit Whistler.ca, For more information on this infographic, see 'Notes on Infographics' on Page 4 or contact Adeniyi Asiyanbi, UBC Okanagan. a.asiyanbi@ubc.ca

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# ENGAGEMENT WITH WILDFIRE RISK MITIGATION AMONG WHISTLER RESIDENTS

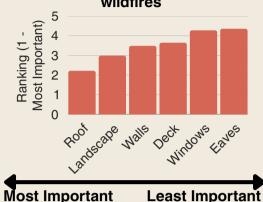
#### PERCEPTION OF WILDFIRE MITIGATION

73%

believe that landscape fuel management is effective for fire risk mitigation

76%

'agree' or 'strongly agree' that mitigation will significantly reduce damage to their property Ranking of perceived importance in the protection of property against wildfires



'disagree', 'strongly disagree', or are 'neutral' that fuel thinning impacts their enjoyment of nature

71%

### **ENGAGEMENT WITH FIRESMART**

44%
have had a
FireSmart
assessment done
for their property

54%

would like to have a FireSmart assessment

55% would have a FireSmart assessment at no cost, and 31% at a maximum cost of \$250



56% 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that it is difficult to find money for mitigation work



'agree' or 'strongly agree' that they have the skills to complete wildfire risk mitigation work

#### MITIGATIVE ACTIONS COMPLETED OR PLANNED BY RESPONDENTS

Keep grass short and water frequently during the spring, summer and autumn 63 33 Remove shrubs, trees or fallen branches close to your house 65 Thin shrubs or trees so that nearby plants and trees do not touch 50 24 Prune large trees by removing all branches that are close to the ground 55 22 Remove needles, leaves and overhanging branches from the roof and gutters 61 Landscape with fire resistant materials and vegetation (such as rocks, aspen etc) 39 Screen house vents, gutters and the underside of eaves with metal mesh 32 39 Screen or enclose the undersides of decks and porches 10 Install metal, asphalt, slate, tile or other fire resistant roofing materials on your roof 70 22 Install double or thermal pane or tempered glass in windows and exterior glass 71 Install stucco, metal, brick or other fire resistant exterior siding on your house 28 58 0 20 60 80 100 40 Proportion of respondents (%) Completed To complete in 1 yr To complete in 2 yrs To complete in 3 yrs

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# KNOWLEDGE AND VALUES UNDERLYING ENGAGEMENT WITH WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT AMONG WHISTLER RESIDENTS

#### **KNOWLEDGE OF WILDFIRE RESPONSE**

50%

think Whistler's fire response resources will reach their limits when 5 houses are on fire.

public expectations of wildfire security?

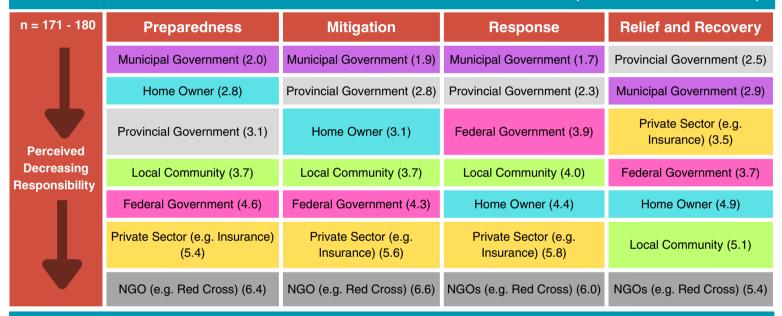
77%

are aware that emergency wildfire response to interface fires often involves a property triage where decisions are made about which property to defend based on property conditions?

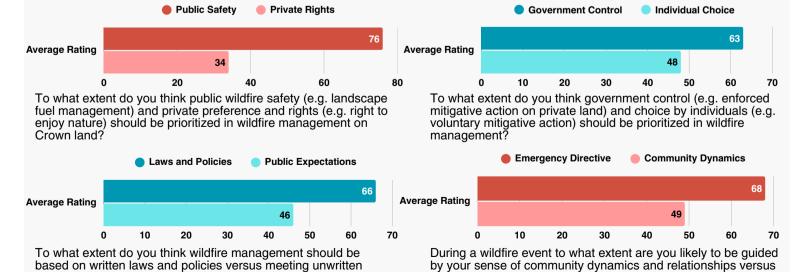
Residents' sources of information on wildfire events happening near them and across the province



# PERCEIVED DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT (AVERAGE RANKING: 1 - 7)



# VALUES UNDERLYING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WITH WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT (AVERAGE RATING: 0 - 100)



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directives from central emergency management?

#### **Notes on Infographics**

This document accompanies a 3-part infographic series listed as follows:

- i. Wildfire Risk Perception and Preparedness among Whistler Residents (Page 1)
- ii. Engagement with Wildfire Risk Mitigation among Whistler Residents (Page 2)
- iii. Knowledge and Values Underlying Engagement with Wildfire Management among Whistler Residents (Page 3)

#### The Survey

The survey on which the infographics were based was conducted in Whistler between April and October 2024. The survey consisted of 62 questions of various formats, grouped into several sections. The survey was multimodal: respondents were invited to complete the survey online, and a follow-up invitation included a paper copy of the survey for those who had not completed it online but preferred to respond to a paper version.

#### Sampling

We employed a two-stage systematic sampling process to ensure a representative spread of sampled residences across Whistler. Using the 2024 Whistler civil address map and a list of Whistler's 297 residential streets, the first stage involved choosing every fourth street, and the second stage involved choosing every second residence. In total, 1311 residences were selected and sent a copy of the survey. With a permanent residency rate of approximately 50% across Whistler's residences, we assumed that about half of the survey respondents would be delivered to temporary accommodations, such as short-term rentals. We thus assumed that the effective sample size was approximately 650 residences. The survey received 234 responses.

#### Public knowledge, perception, and expectations around wildfires

Surveys have long been used in academic and policy research to understand patterns in public engagement with various issues, including wildfires. Understanding these patterns of public engagement can help interested stakeholders gauge how well-informed the public is regarding wildfire science, policies, and programs. Gaps in public knowledge, perception and expectations can then be the focus of awareness campaigns, policy interventions, and deliberative negotiations. At the same time, patterns of public engagement, as revealed by surveys, can indicate public readiness and social receptivity to particular social, policy, or technological innovations.

## Wildfire management and emergency response in Whistler

For more information on Whistler's detailed plans, bylaws, policies and programs on wildfire preparedness, mitigation (including FireSmart), emergency response and recovery, visit <a href="Whistler.ca">Whistler.ca</a>. All Whistler residents and visitors are encouraged to sign up for the Whistler emergency alert system at <a href="whistleralert.connectrocket.com">whistleralert.connectrocket.com</a>

#### More information on this research

This research was conducted by a UBC Okanagan research team led by Dr Adeniyi Asiyanbi (a.asiyanbi@ubc.ca). The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada funded the research project. In collaboration with the UBC Persuasive Technologies and Social Computing Lab (PASCL) led by Dr Ifeoma Adaji (ifeoma.adaji@ubc.ca), the research has led to the development of a free public wildfire planning mobile application, *WISEC* (Wildfire Security), which will be available on Android Google Play and iOS App Store in July 2025.