

INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

CANADIANS' THOUGHTS ON WILDFIRE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

National Public Opinion Survey—September 2026

Matt Smith, Executive Vice President West
Dan Arnold, Chief Strategy Officer

pollara
strategic insights

Methodology

2

Field Window	Fielded August 21 to 31, 2026
Sampling	Pollara conducted an online survey of n=2,250 adult Canadians, with British Columbia boosted to n=600. The survey was fielded in English and French, with 325 French-language completes.
Weighting	Data has been weighted to reflect the age, gender and regional composition of the Canadian adult population, based on the most recent census figures. Regional quotas were set to ensure each region is properly represented, with an additional boost in British Columbia.
Reliability*	While online surveys cannot be assigned a margin of error, a probability sample of this size would be accurate to $\pm 2.1\%$, 19 times out of 20. Adjusting for a design effect of 1.25, the effective sample is approximately n=1,800, giving a practical margin of error of $\pm 2.3\%$ nationally and $\pm 4.0\%$ for British Columbia.

REGION	SAMPLE SIZE (Unweighted)	MARGIN OF ERROR*
Atlantic	200	$\pm 6.9\%$
Quebec	400	$\pm 4.9\%$
Ontario	550	$\pm 4.2\%$
Prairies	500	$\pm 4.4\%$
BC + Territories	600	$\pm 4.0\%$
TOTAL	2,250	$\pm 2.1\%$



CANADIAN
RESEARCH
INSIGHTS
COUNCIL

POLLARA STRATEGIC INSIGHTS IS A MEMBER OF THE **CANADIAN RESEARCH INSIGHTS COUNCIL** (CRIC), AND THIS RESEARCH WAS CONDUCTED IN COMPLIANCE WITH CRIC STANDARDS.

pollara
strategic insights

Key Findings

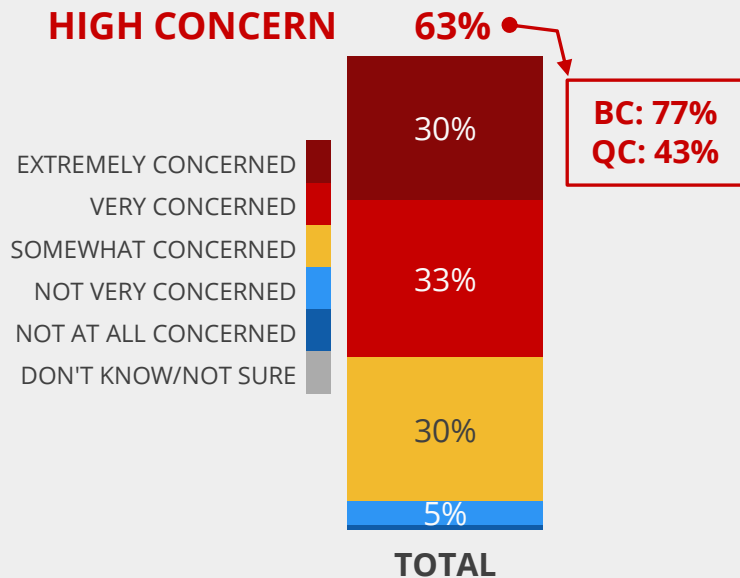
- 93% of Canadians are concerned about wildfires, including 63% who are extremely or very concerned, and 73% say the risk to Canada has grown over the past five years.
- 58% report a household impact from wildfire in recent years, and 48% are affected by wildfire smoke or poor air quality every year.
- 62% rate the Government of Canada's emergency response as good or excellent, compared with 40% for prevention.
- 90% support year-round investment to reduce wildfire risk.
- 49% had never heard of **Indigenous fire stewardship**. Once it was described, 84% said it is important for Canada and 83% supported a larger role for it.
- 82% support federal funding for **Indigenous fire stewardship**, and 87% support investing in **Fire Guardians** who help support wildfire prevention, response, evacuation, and recovery.
- Asked how to spend a \$250 million federal wildfire investment, 52% chose 750 **Indigenous Fire Guardians** and 22% chose four additional water bombers.
- 76% support First Nations conducting cultural burns during safe burning periods, and First Nations are the group most trusted to carry them out (51%).

Wildfire is a national concern, and most see the risk growing

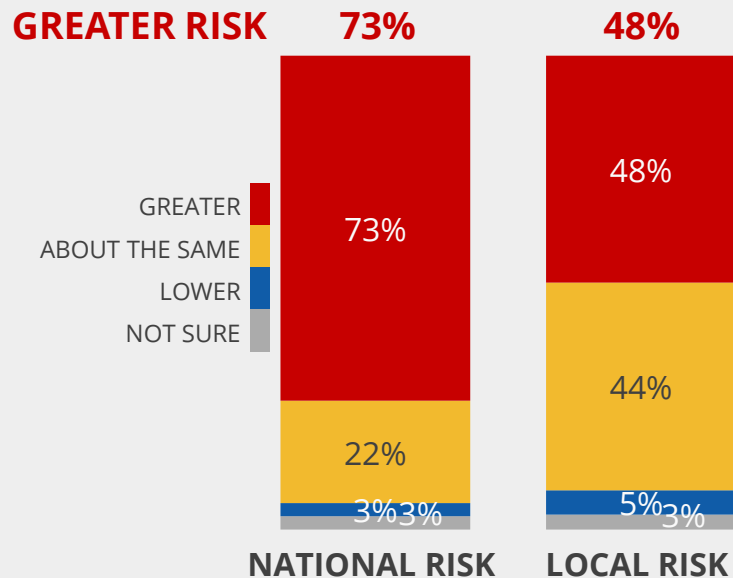
4

- 93% are concerned about wildfires in Canada, including 63% who are extremely or very concerned, and 73% say the risk to the country is greater than it was five years ago.

Level of Concern About Wildfires in Canada



Perceived Change in Wildfire Risk Over the Past Five Years



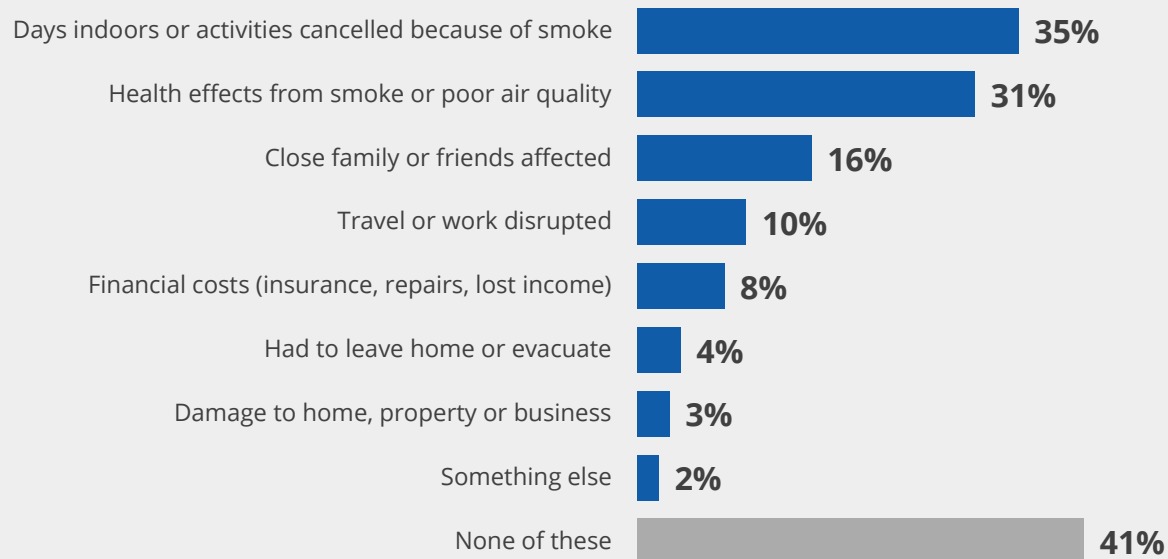
Base: Total (n=2,250). Note: Data <2% not labeled.

- Q** In general, how concerned are you about wildfires in Canada?
Compared with five years ago, do you think the risk of wildfire where you live is greater, about the same, or lower?
Compared with five years ago, do you think the risk of wildfire in Canada as a whole is greater, about the same, or lower?

Most households report a wildfire impact, mostly from smoke

- 58% report at least one household impact from wildfire in recent years; the most common are days indoors or cancelled activities because of smoke (35%) and health effects (31%), while 4% had to evacuate.

Personal or Household Impacts of Wildfire in Recent Years



58%

report at least one household impact



Base: Total (n=2,250).

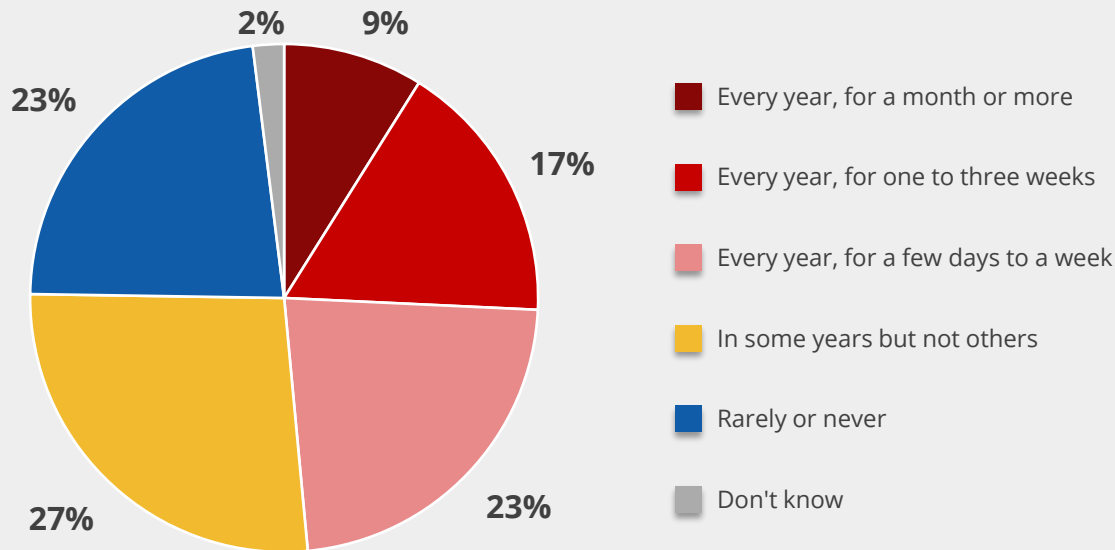
Have you personally, or has your household, experienced any of the following as a result of wildfire in the past several years? Select all that apply.

Half of Canadians are affected by wildfire smoke every year

6

- 48% are affected by wildfire smoke or poor air quality every year, including 9% for a month or more, while 23% say rarely or never.

Frequency of Being Affected by Wildfire Smoke or Poor Air Quality



48%

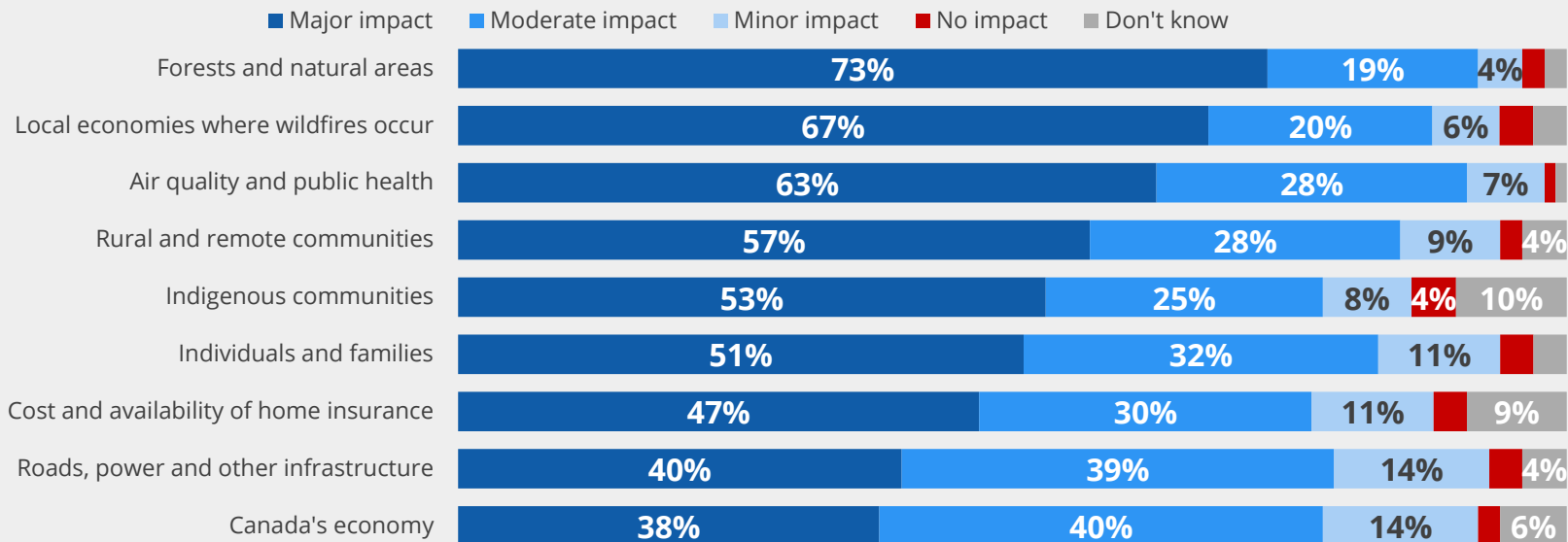
affected by smoke every year

Most see a major impact on forests, local economies and air

7

- 73% say wildfires have a major impact on forests and natural areas, 67% on local economies where fires occur, and 63% on air quality and public health.

Perceived Impact of Wildfires Across Key Areas



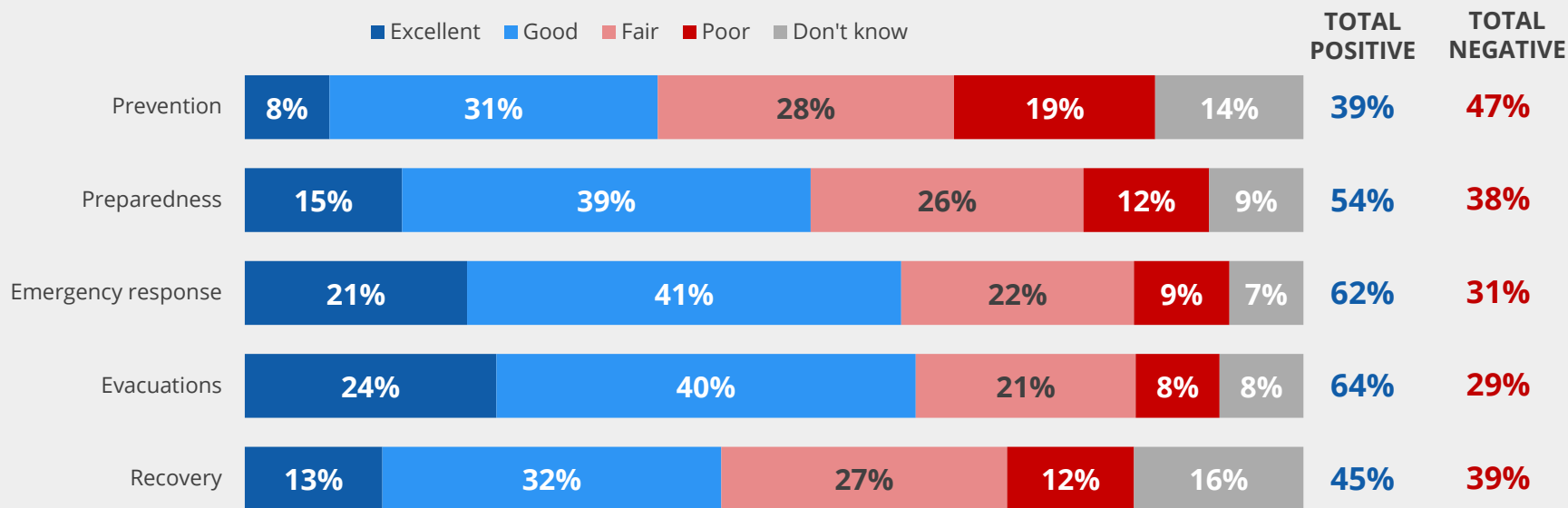
Base: Total (n=2,250). Note: Data <4% not labelled.
How much of an impact, if any, do wildfires have on each of the following?

Ottawa scores higher on emergency response than prevention

8

- 62% rate the Government of Canada's emergency response as good or excellent, compared with 40% for prevention.

Ratings of Government of Canada Performance on Wildfire



Base: Respondents asked about the Government of Canada (n=1,125). Split sample: the other half rated their provincial or territorial government. Note: Data <4% not labelled.

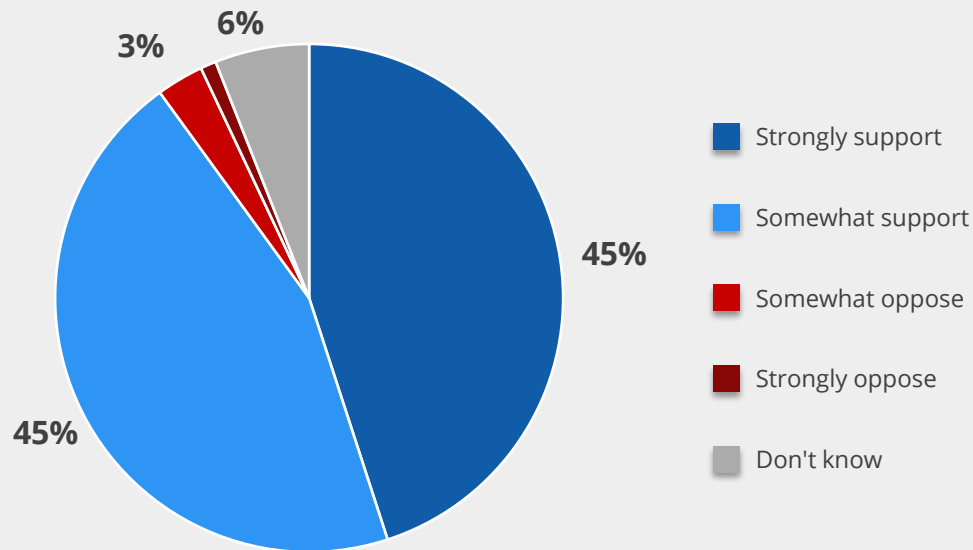
How would you rate how well the government of Canada is currently doing on each of the following aspects of wildfire?

9 in 10 support year-round investment to reduce risk

9

- 90% support governments investing in year-round work to reduce wildfire risk rather than mainly responding during wildfire season (45% strongly, 45% somewhat), while 4% oppose.

Support for Year-Round Government Investment to Reduce Wildfire Risk



90%
support year-round
investment



Base: Total (n=2,250).

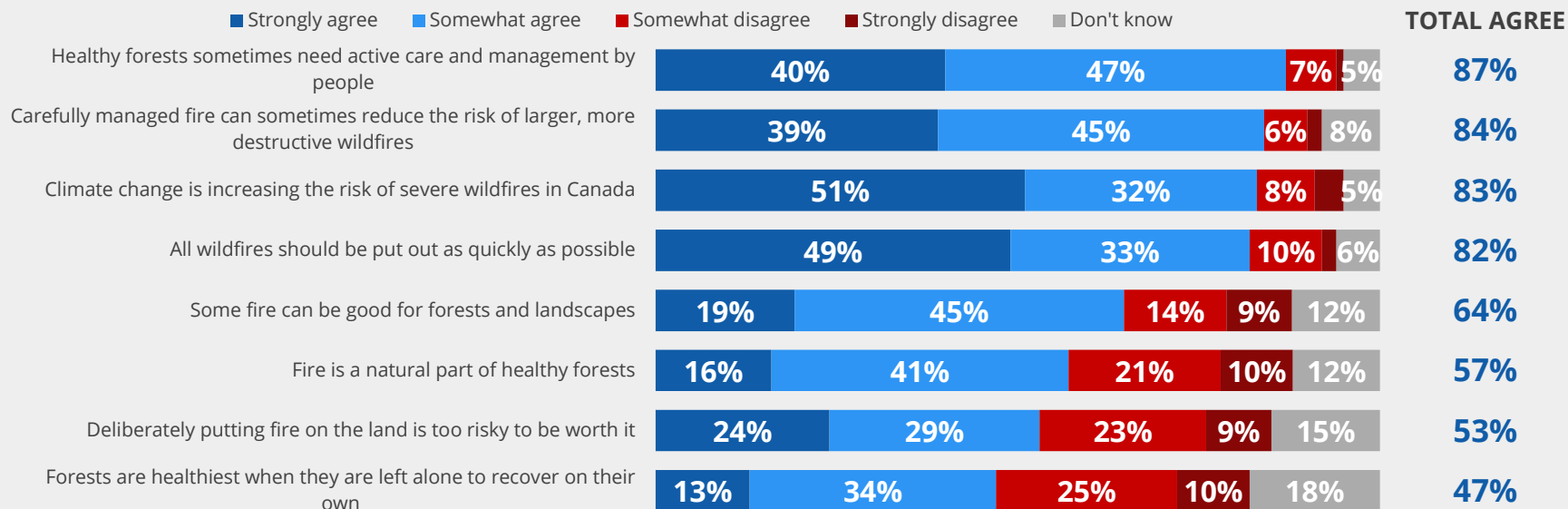
How much would you support or oppose governments investing in year-round work to reduce wildfire risk, rather than mainly responding during wildfire season?

Most agree carefully managed fire can reduce wildfire risk

10

- 84% agree carefully managed fire can sometimes reduce the risk of larger, more destructive wildfires.

Agreement with Statements About Fire and Forests



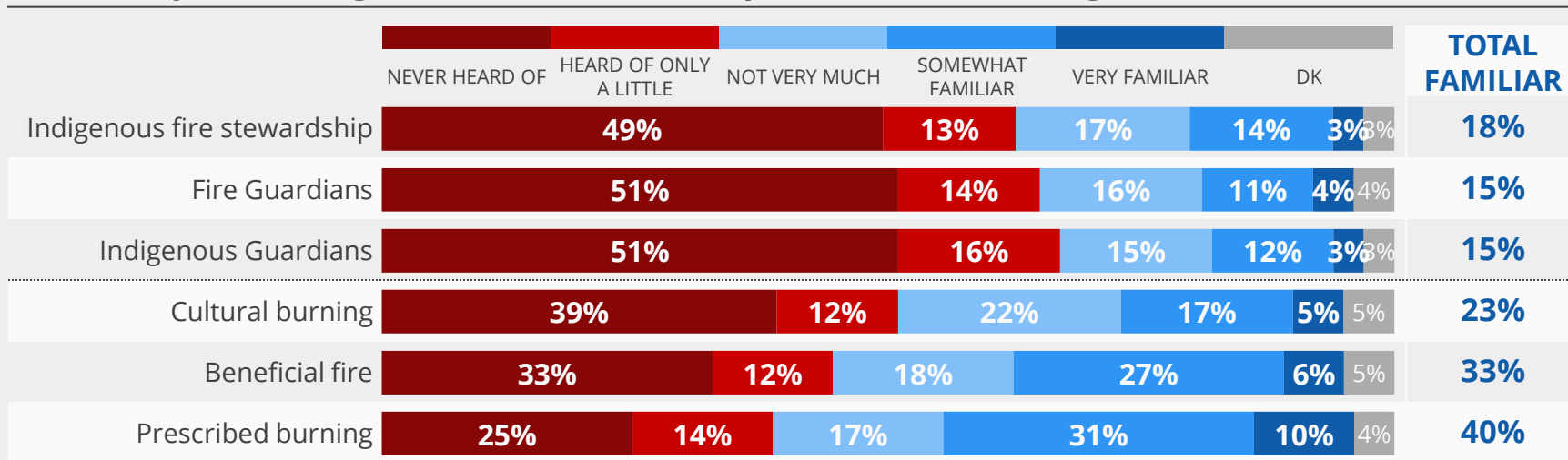
Base: Total (n=2,250). Note: Data <4% not labelled.
Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Half had never heard of Indigenous fire stewardship

11

- 49% had never heard of Indigenous fire stewardship and 51% had never heard of Fire Guardians; 18% say they are familiar with Indigenous fire stewardship.

Familiarity with Indigenous Fire Stewardship and Wildfire Management



Base: Total (n=2,250).



Before today, how familiar were you with the idea of Indigenous fire stewardship?

How familiar are you with each of the following?

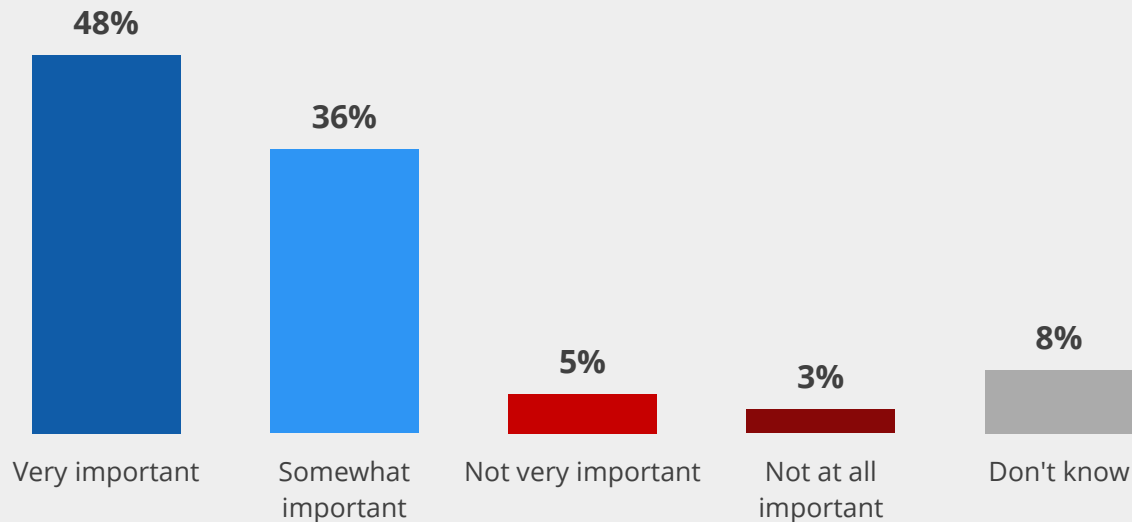
How familiar are you with each of the following?

84% say Indigenous fire stewardship is important for Canada

12

- After reading a short description, 48% said Indigenous fire stewardship is very important for Canada and 36% somewhat important, while 8% said it is not important.

Importance of Indigenous Fire Stewardship for Canada



SHORT DESCRIPTION

"Indigenous fire stewardship refers to the many ways Indigenous Peoples care for the land in relation to fire. It is year-round and can include preventing and reducing wildfire risk, caring for healthy landscapes, cultural burning, monitoring the land, preparing communities, responding to wildfires, supporting evacuations, helping communities recover, and taking part in decisions about fire on their territories."



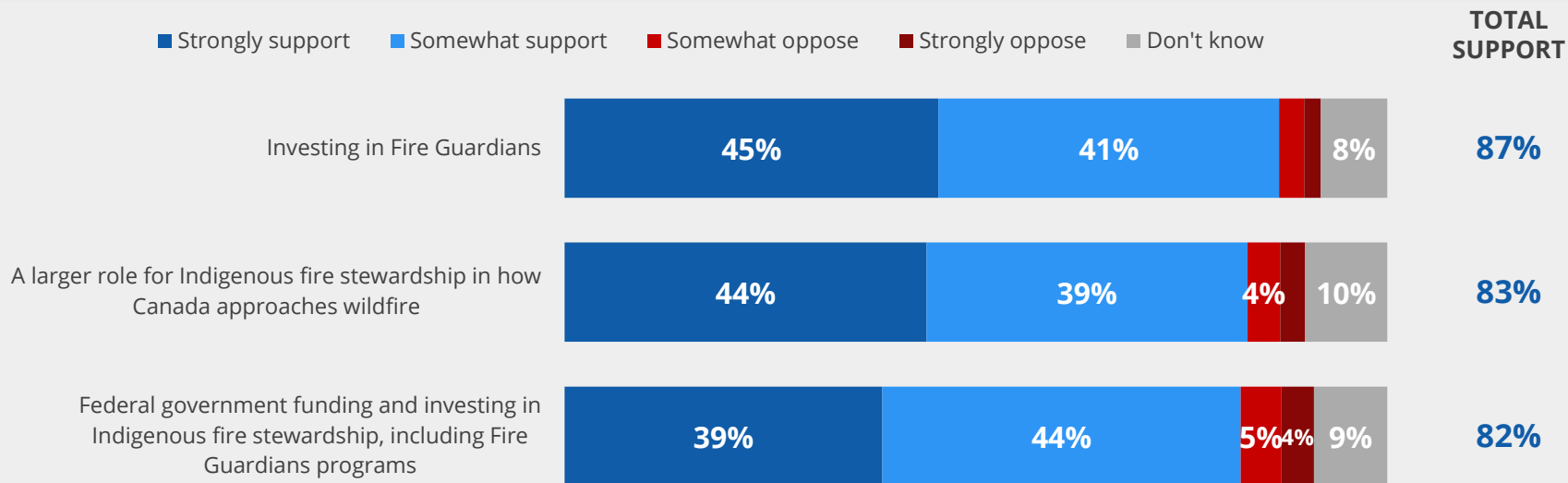
Base: Total (n=2,250). Asked after respondents read a description of Indigenous fire stewardship.
Based on this description, how important or unimportant do you think Indigenous fire stewardship is for Canada?

More than 8 in 10 support Fire Guardians and federal funding

13

- 87% support investing in Fire Guardians, 83% support a larger role for Indigenous fire stewardship, and 82% support federal funding for it; opposition is 9% or less on each.

Support for Indigenous Fire Stewardship, Fire Guardians and Federal Investment



Base: Total (n=2,250). Asked after respondents read descriptions of Indigenous fire stewardship and Fire Guardians.

...support or oppose a larger role for Indigenous fire stewardship in how Canada approaches wildfire? | ...support or oppose investing in Fire Guardians – trained local Indigenous people working year-round to reduce wildfire risk and respond to fires?

Overall, how much do you support or oppose the federal government funding and investing in Indigenous fire stewardship, including Fire Guardians programs?



9 in 10 back a larger Indigenous role in every function

14

- Support ranges from 89% to 90% across all nine functions, from preventing wildfires to helping communities recover.

Support for a Larger Role for Trained Local Indigenous People in Wildfire Management

Function	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Total support
Helping communities prepare before wildfire season	54%	37%	90%
Helping communities recover after wildfires	55%	35%	90%
Monitoring conditions on the land	52%	37%	90%
Guiding outside emergency responders using local knowledge	53%	36%	90%
Preventing wildfires and reducing risk before they start	56%	34%	90%
Partnering with federal, provincial, territorial wildfire agencies	54%	36%	90%
Supporting evacuations and helping vulnerable residents get to safety	54%	35%	89%
Responding to wildfires	52%	36%	89%
Protecting culturally and environmentally important places	51%	38%	89%



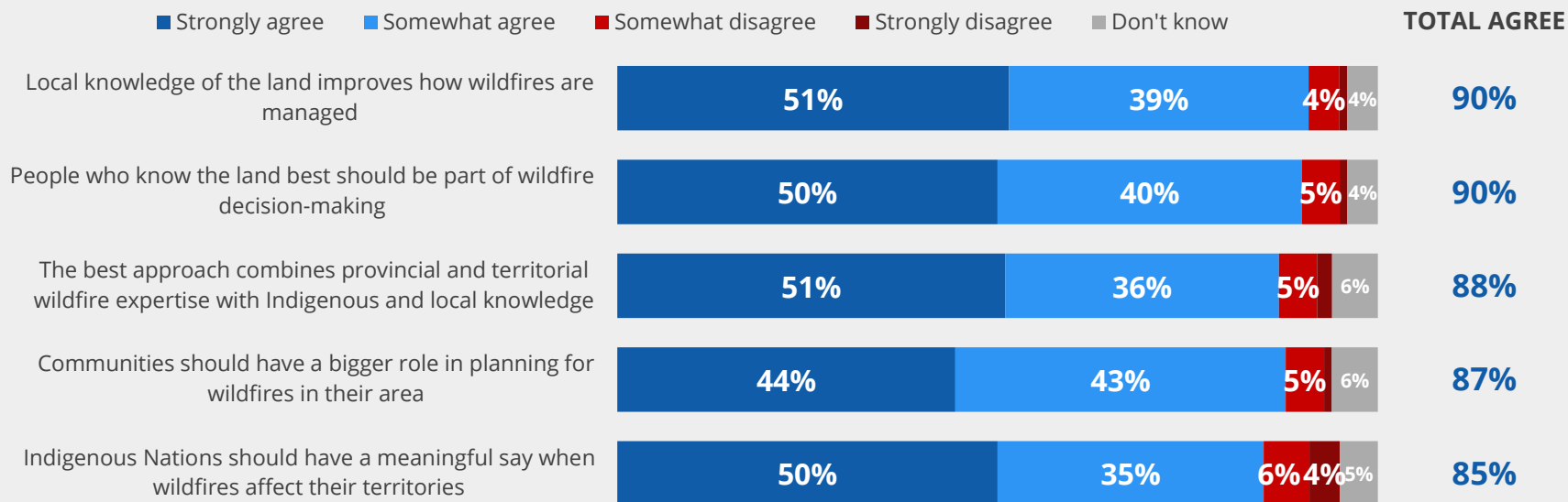
Base: Total (n=2,250). Total support is calculated before rounding.
How much would you support or oppose trained local Indigenous people having a larger role in each of the following?

9 in 10 agree local knowledge improves wildfire management

15

- 90% agree local knowledge of the land improves how wildfires are managed, and 88% say the best approach combines provincial and territorial expertise with Indigenous and local knowledge.

Agreement with Statements About Local Knowledge and Partnership



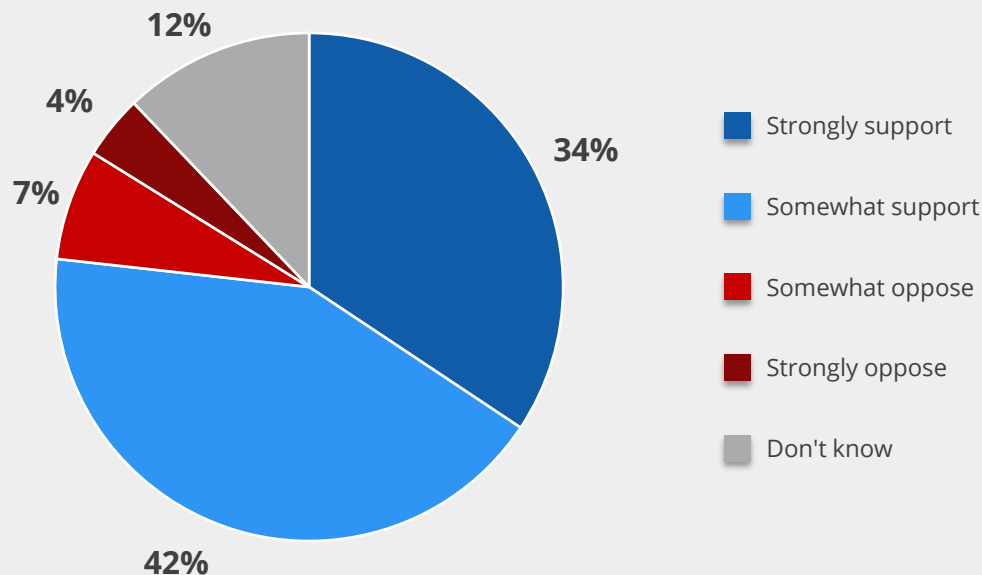
Base: Total (n=2,250). Note: Data <4% not labelled.
Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following.

3 in 4 support cultural burns by First Nations

16

- 76% support First Nations conducting cultural burns during safe burning periods (34% strongly), while 12% oppose and 12% are unsure.

Support for First Nations Conducting Cultural Burns During Safe Burning Periods



76%

support cultural burns by
First Nations



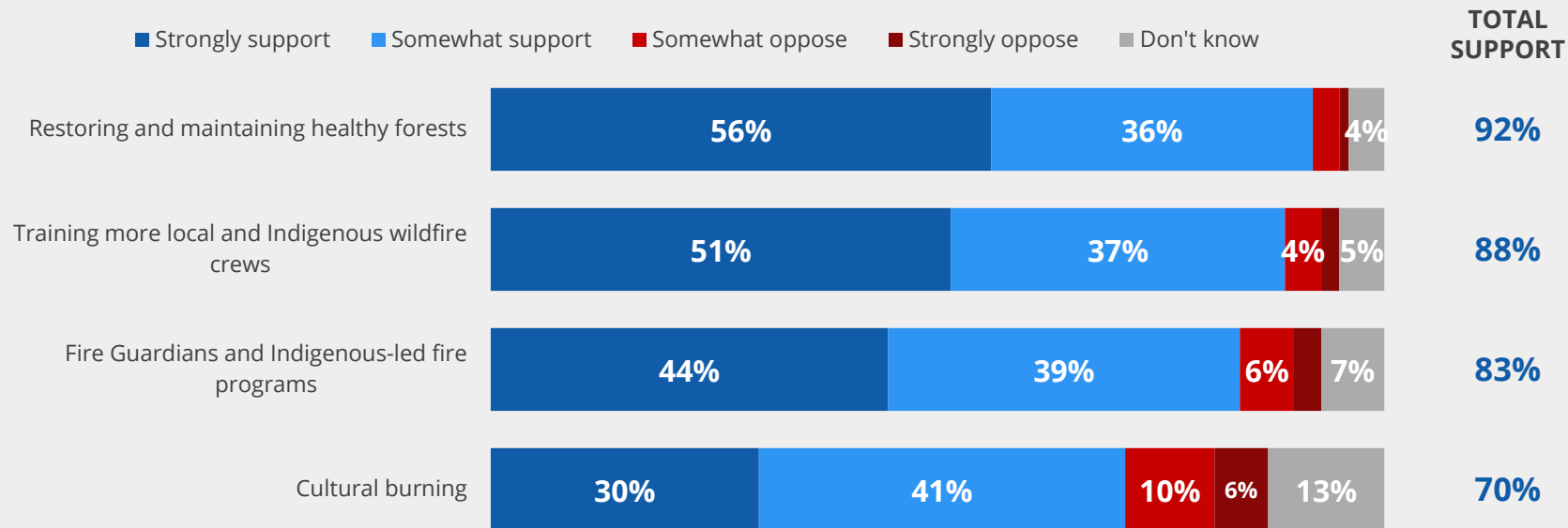
Base: Total (n=2,250). Asked after respondents read a description of cultural burning.
Based on this description, how much would you support or oppose First Nations conducting cultural burns during safe burning periods?

Strong majorities support federal investment in forests, crews, Guardians and cultural burning

17

- Support ranges from 92% for restoring and maintaining healthy forests and 88% for training more local and Indigenous crews, to 83% for Fire Guardians and Indigenous-led fire programs and 70% for cultural burning.

Support for Federal Investment



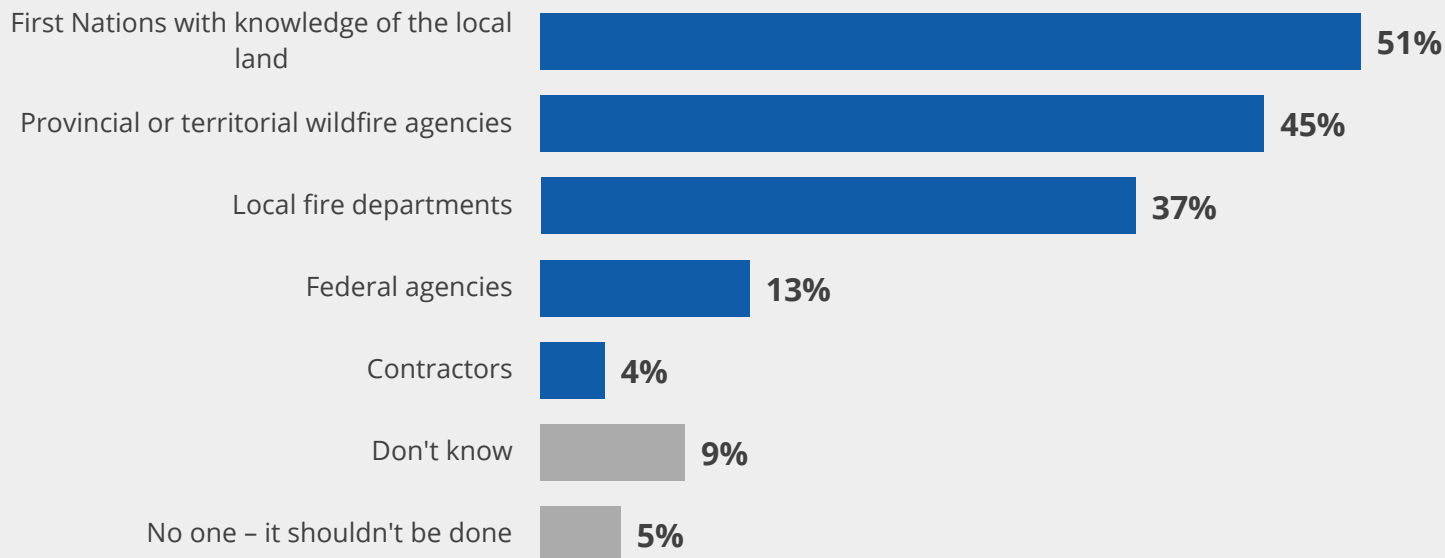
Base: Total (n=2,250). Note: Data <4% not labelled.
And how much would you support or oppose federal investment in each of the following?

First Nations are most trusted to carry out cultural burns

18

- 51% name First Nations with knowledge of the local land among the groups they would most trust, ahead of provincial and territorial wildfire agencies (45%) and local fire departments (37%).

Most Trusted to Plan and Carry Out Cultural Burning Near Communities

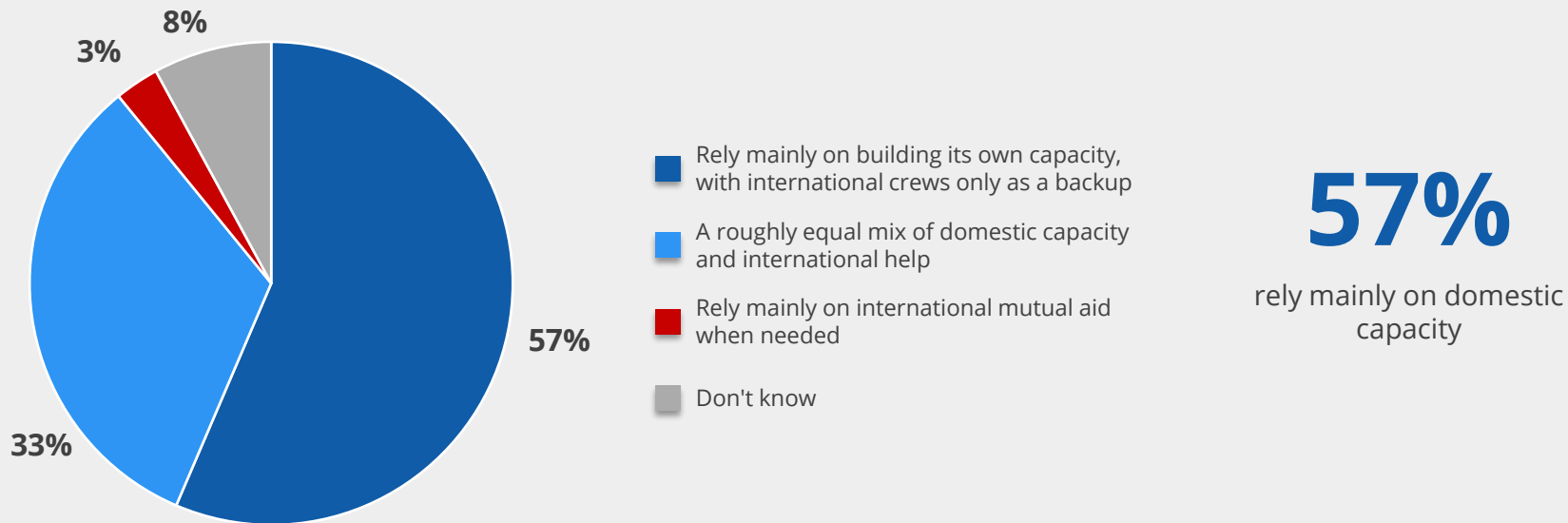


Base: Total (n=2,250). Respondents could select up to two; totals add to more than 100%.
Who would you most trust to plan and carry out cultural burning near communities? **Select up to two.**

Most want Canada to rely mainly on its own wildfire capacity

- 57% say Canada should rely mainly on building its own wildfire capacity and use international crews only as a backup, while 33% prefer an equal mix and 3% would rely mainly on international help.

How Canada Should Meet Its Wildfire Capacity Needs



Base: Total (n=2,250). Split sample: half were asked about 'local wildfire capacity' and half about 'local and Indigenous wildfire capacity'; results are combined.
Which of the following comes closest to your view, even if none are exactly right?

Local and Indigenous crews would get \$36 of every \$100

20

- Given \$100 to divide among wildfire crews, Canadians allocate on average \$45 to provincial and territorial crews, \$36 to local and Indigenous crews and \$19 to international crews.

Provincial Crews 45%	Local and Indigenous Crews 36%	International 19%
-------------------------	-----------------------------------	----------------------

Average Allocation of \$100 by Region

Average of every \$100	National	BC	Alta.	Sask.	Man.	Ont.	Que.	Atl.
Provincial and territorial crews	\$45	\$48	\$46	\$42	\$45	\$43	\$46	\$48
Local and Indigenous crews	\$36	\$32	\$34	\$36	\$37	\$38	\$38	\$33
International crews	\$19	\$20	\$20	\$22	\$19	\$20	\$16	\$19



Base: Total (n=2,250). Regional bases range from n=100 (Manitoba, Saskatchewan) to n=600 (BC and Territories).
J4. Imagine Canada has \$100 to spend on fighting wildfires. How would you divide it among the following?

53% want more wildfire spending to go to Indigenous-led programs

21

- 53% say more of the money Canada already spends on wildfires should go to Indigenous-led fire programs and communities, while 19% say about the same, 6% say less and 21% are unsure.

Preferred Share of Wildfire Funding for Indigenous-Led Fire Programs and Communities



Base: Total (n=2,250).

Thinking about the money Canada already spends on wildfires, how much of it do you think should go to Indigenous-led fire programs and communities?

Canadians prefer Fire Guardians to water bombers by more than 2 to 1

22

- 52% would spend \$250 million on about 750 Fire Guardians and 22% on four more water bombers.

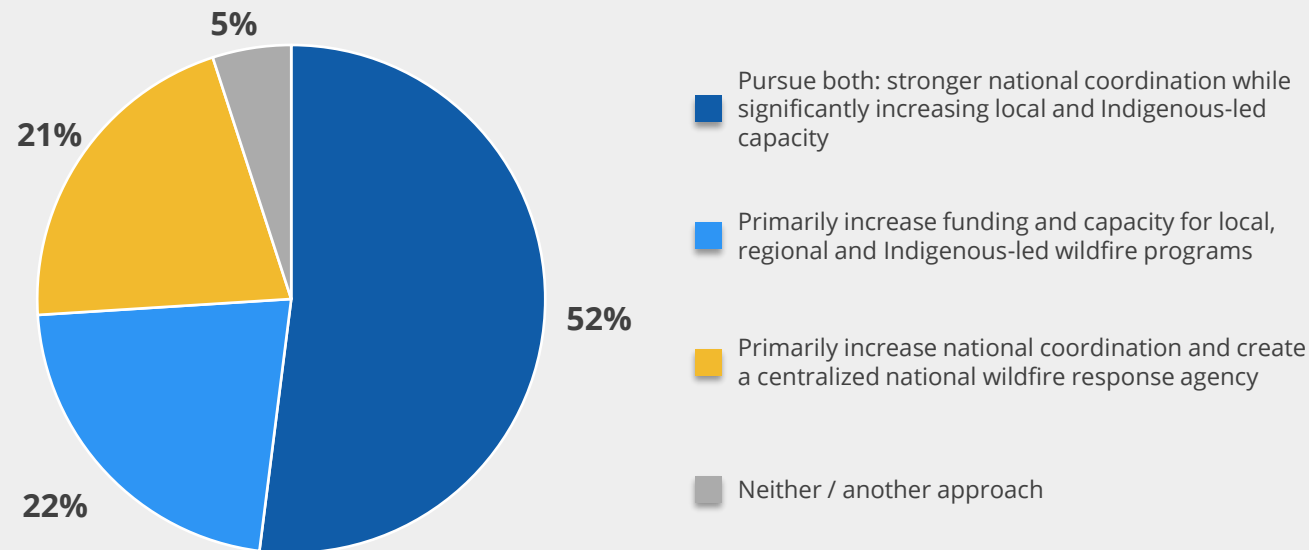


K7. Suppose the federal government were to make a major new investment in wildfire of about \$250 million. Which of the following would you prefer that money be spent on? Base: Total (n=2,250).

Most want both national coordination and more local capacity

- 52% want stronger national coordination combined with significantly more local and Indigenous-led capacity, compared with 21% for a centralized agency alone and 22% for mainly local and regional programs.

Preferred Approach to Strengthening Canada's Wildfire Response



52%

want to pursue both

Q Base: Total (n=2,250). Two split-sample versions of the question are combined.
K5. There are different views about how Canada should strengthen its wildfire response. Which approach would you prefer?

INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

CANADIANS' THOUGHTS ON WILDFIRE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

National Public Opinion Survey—September 2026

Matt Smith, Executive Vice President West
Dan Arnold, Chief Strategy Officer

pollara
strategic insights