

SURVEY RESULTS

Living With the Wild.

Exploring Public Attitudes Towards Apex
Predators in British Columbia & Alberta

A NOTE FROM US

Understanding people is essential to protecting wildlife.

Every conversation about wildlife begins with people.

The decisions governments make, the policies they introduce, the stories shared in the media, and even the choices we make when we head outdoors are all shaped by how we think and feel about the animals that share our landscapes.

For organizations working to protect apex predators, understanding those attitudes is just as important as understanding the animals themselves.

At **Exposed Wildlife Conservancy**, we believe coexistence begins with understanding. That means understanding wildlife through science, but it also means understanding the people who live, work, and recreate alongside them.

This research was commissioned to better understand how residents of **British Columbia and Alberta** view **grizzly bears, black bears, cougars, and wolves**. We wanted to move beyond assumptions and hear directly from people about their experiences, concerns, values, and hopes for the future of wildlife in western Canada.

We found the results encouraging and hope that you will too. Perhaps most importantly, the research shows that coexistence is not simply an environmental aspiration and for many people, it is already viewed as both possible and worthwhile.

We hope this insight can support conversations between communities, governments, researchers, Indigenous Nations, conservation organizations, and everyone who shares our landscapes with wildlife.

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Overview

OVERVIEW

The survey.

In 2026, EWC commissioned the Angus Reid Group to conduct a survey to understand public perception of apex predators and coexistence in Western Canada. The survey focused on four species: grizzly bears, black bears, wolves, and cougars.

1,506 people were surveyed. 50% from BC, 50% from Alberta. The total sample was weighted to reflect the general population in British Columbia and Alberta.

The results offer insight into provincial differences, beliefs, emotions, and behaviours, as well as how perceptions differ across the four species. This research establishes a baseline understanding to inform future education and policy efforts.

Before we dive into the details...

Here are the hard-hitting findings...

People want coexistence

The strong majority of people support coexistence with grizzly bears, black bears, wolves and cougars.

Across species, **over 72%** believe humans and apex predators can successfully coexist.

People are looking for guidance & support

84% actively seek out information on apex predators to coexist safely.

79% are likely to change their behaviour with clear guidance.

Education is seen as the clearest path to coexistence

91% agree that most encounters can be avoided with the right knowledge & behaviour.

Over 80% believe education is more effective than lethal control at managing conflicts.

Who we asked



WHO WE ASKED

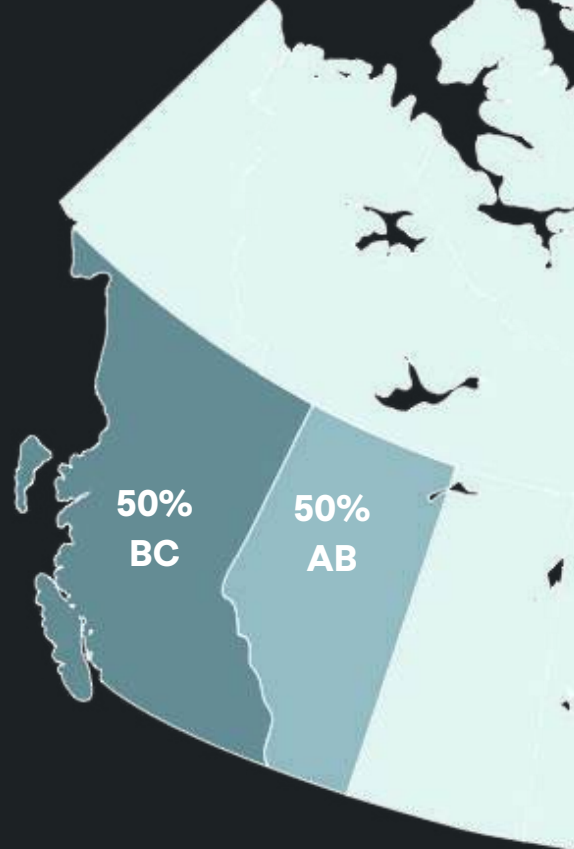
Respondent profile.

People:

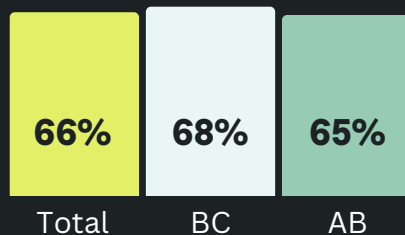
1,506

Respondents

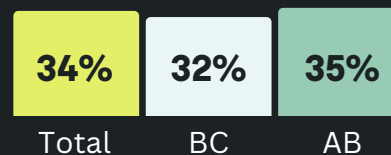
The total sample was weighted to reflect the general population in British Columbia and Alberta.



Urban Residents:



Rural Residents:



Gender:

51%

Female

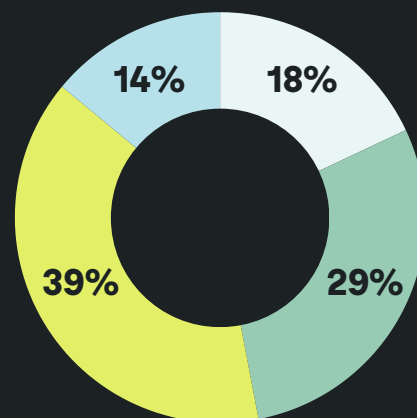
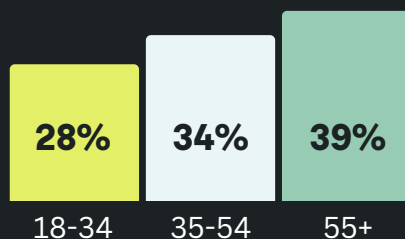
49%

Male

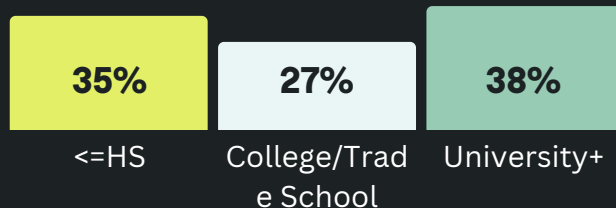
Household Income:

- <\$50k
- \$50k - <\$100k
- \$100k+
- DNK/Rather not say

Age:

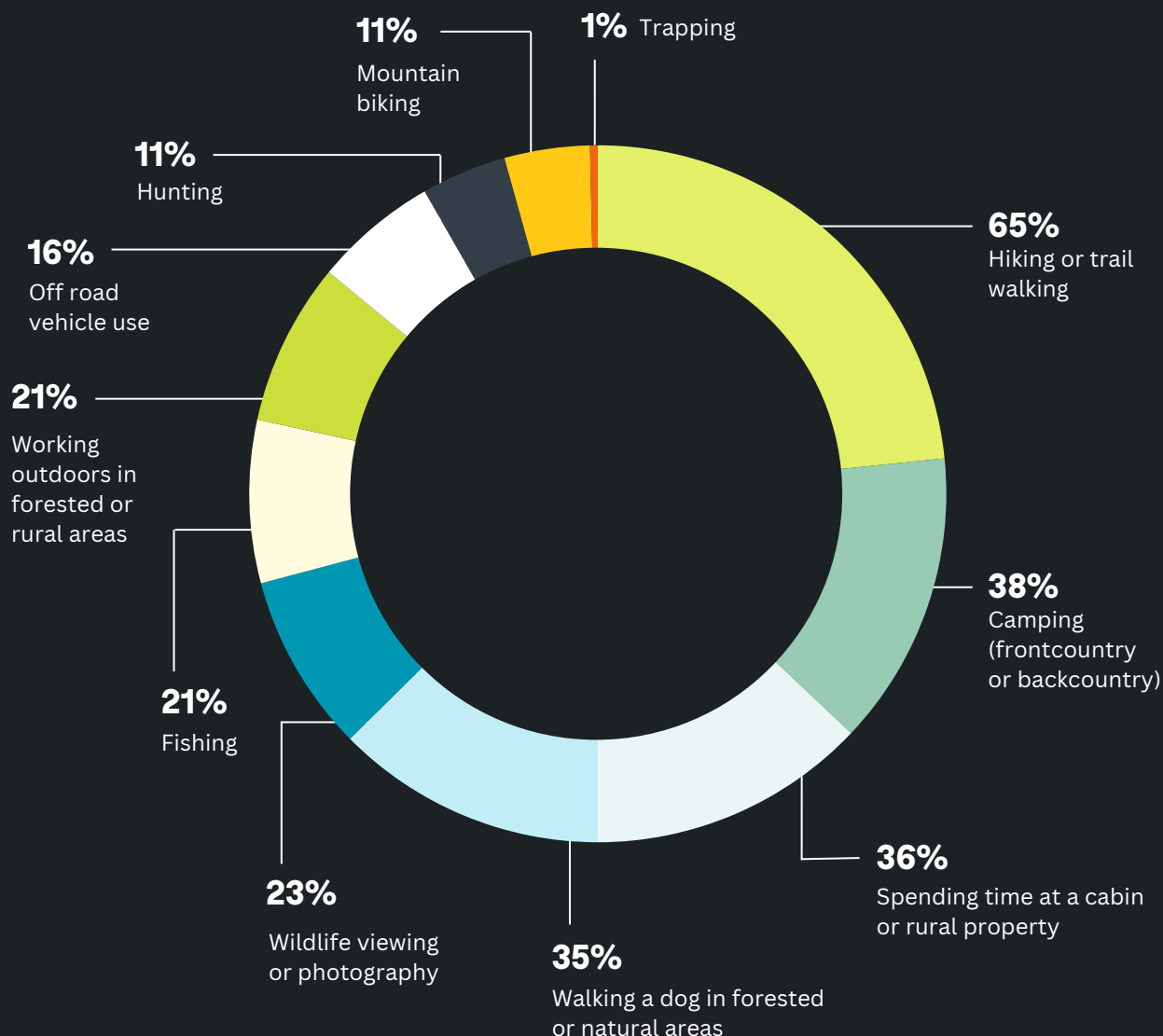


Education:



WHO WE ASKED

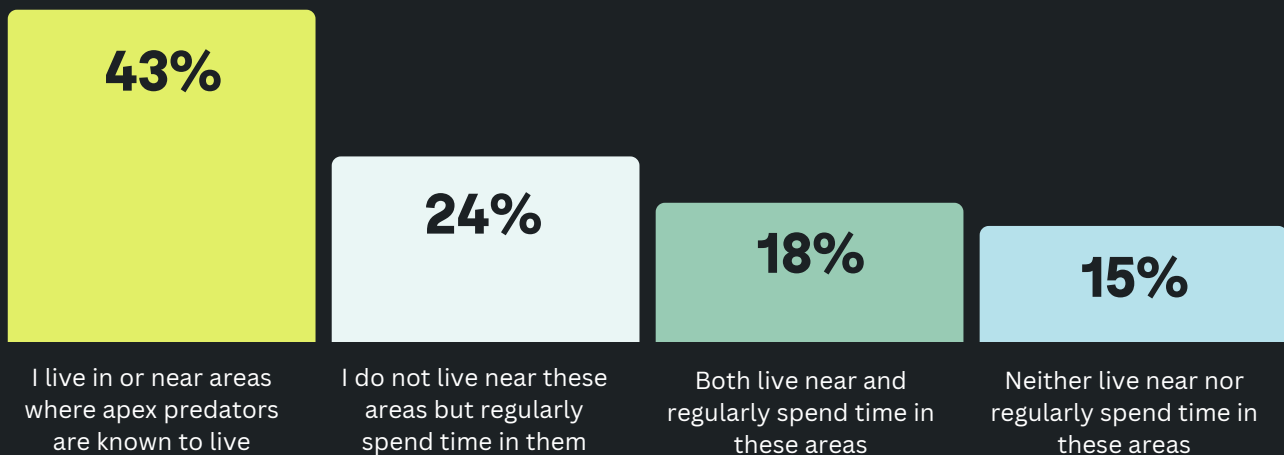
84% participate in outdoor activities or work outdoors.



The people we asked are highly engaged in outdoor activities, most commonly hiking or trail walking, followed by camping and time spent in rural or natural settings. A smaller but notable share engages in more specialized activities such as hunting, off-road vehicle use, and fishing.

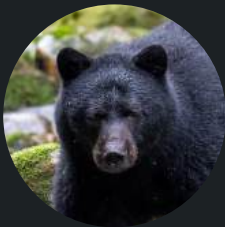
WHO WE ASKED

85% live & spend time in areas shared with apex predators.



Who Shares the Landscape:

Apex predators residents reported to be present in areas they live or spend time outdoors. 14% selected 'Other' and 2% selected 'Not Sure'



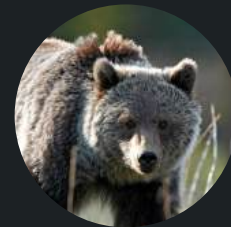
85%
Black Bears



80%
Cougars



53%
Wolves



41%
Grizzly Bears

Most residents report exposure to apex predator habitats, and a large majority of respondents live or spend time in areas where apex predators are present. We found that exposure shapes perception and confidence. People with more exposure to apex predators tend to feel calmer and more knowledgeable.

Education & knowledge



People recognize apex predators' ecological importance

96% believe apex predators are an important part of our ecosystems

EDUCATION

Good news. There's a great foundation of understanding.

Right off the bat, it's excellent news that 96% of residents recognize the value of apex predators to our ecosystems and 86% understand the importance of learning to live alongside them with responsible non-lethal management*.

It's even better news that 79% of people are likely to change their behaviours when spending time in apex predator regions if they had clear guidance on how to do so.

Essentially, people understand why we need to coexist; that's not in question for the overwhelming majority of people, but what they don't necessarily know is exactly how to do that in practical terms.



84% Actively seek out information on apex predators and living safely near wildlife.

*We call that 'stewardship'

EDUCATION

The ecological importance of apex predators is widely recognized by residents.

Ecological Impact:

96%

believe apex predators are an **important part of our ecosystems**

95%

understand apex predators help **keep ecosystems in balance**

Support for Coexistence:

“
They are an important part of the ecosystem that **people should learn to live with.**”

Percentage of residents that strongly identify with this statement for each species:



60%

Black Bears



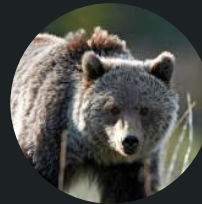
50%

Cougars



58%

Wolves



53%

Grizzly Bears

These species are all considered keystone species because they have a large, essential effect on their natural community. Their daily habits keep forest and river systems healthy in ways that cannot be replicated by other animals, including humans.

EDUCATION

People are looking for guidance, education, and support.

Desire to Learn:

84%

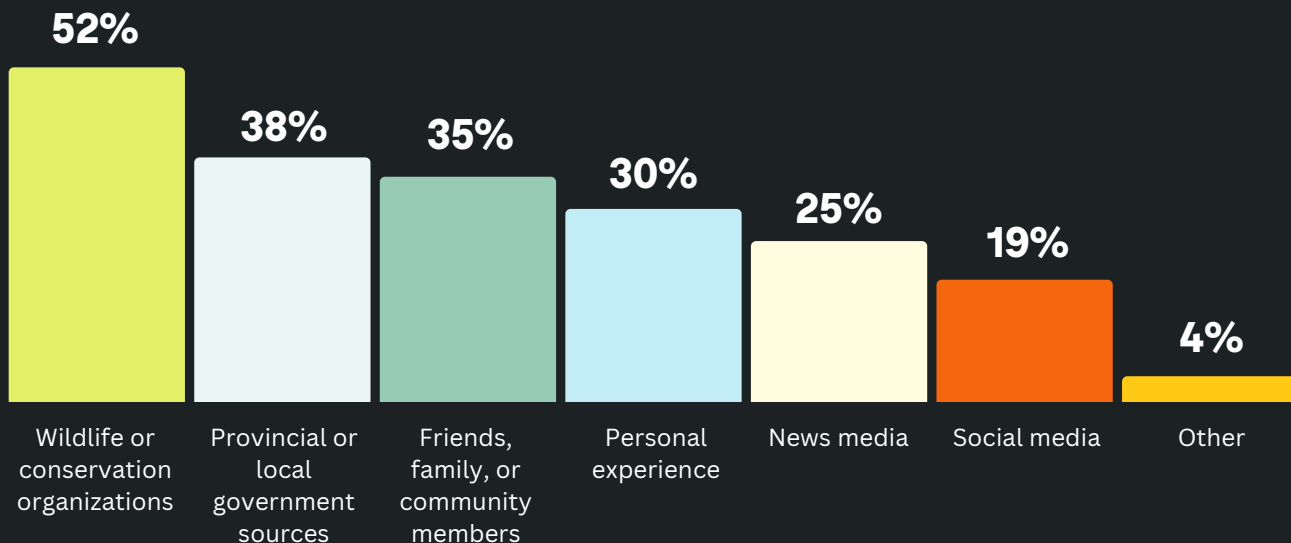
Actively seek out information on apex predators and living safely near wildlife.

Willingness to Adapt:

79%

Are likely to change their behaviours when spending time in apex predator regions, if they had clear guidance on how to do so.

Sources of Information:



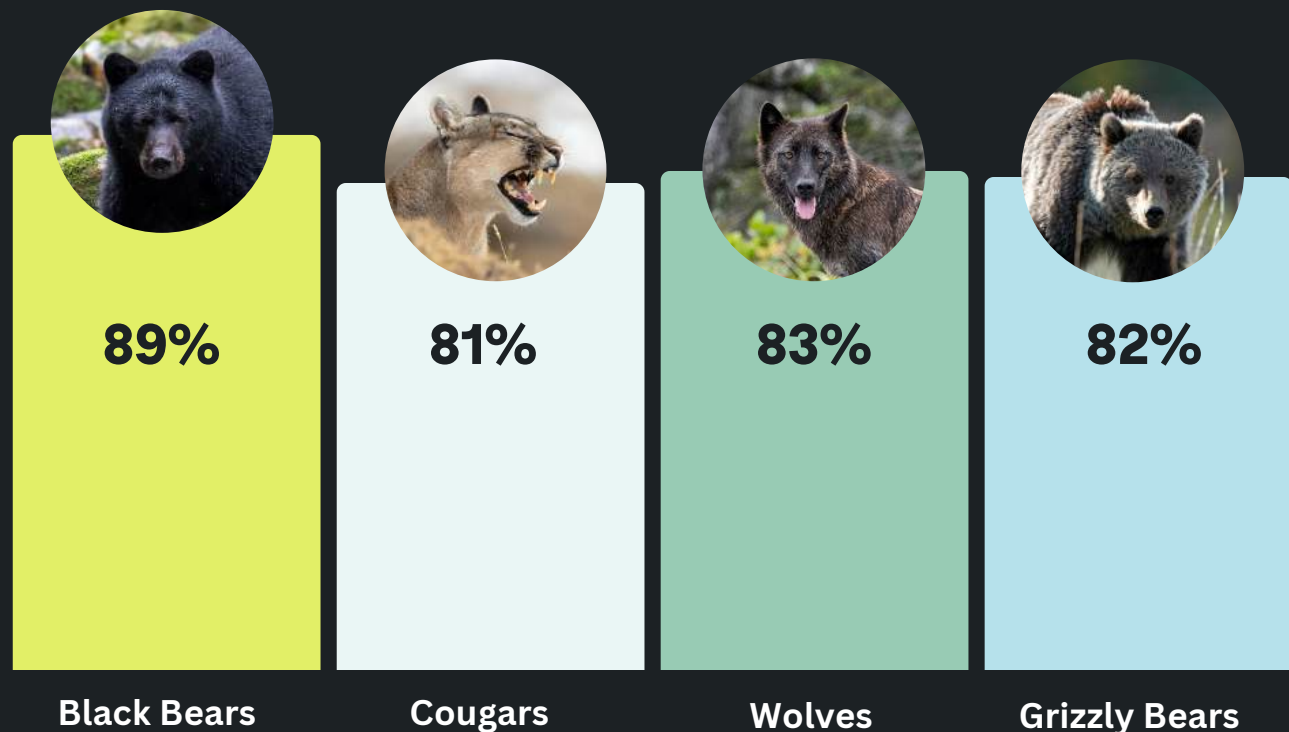
This data shows the significant trust held in conservation organizations and the reliance the public has on them to provide clear, practical guidance and education. With over half of the respondents choosing to seek information and education from wildlife and conservation organizations, this demonstrates the value of continued funding and increased accessibility.

EDUCATION

Over 80% believe education is more effective at managing conflict than lethal control.

Education has strong support:

Across species, there is strong agreement with over 80% believing that education is more effective than lethal control at conflicts prevention.



Education and prevention are seen as the most effective ways to reduce conflict across all four species. Given the public support, there is a huge opportunity here to provide increased practical guidance and species specific education to all age groups as a way to mitigate human-wildlife conflict.

EDUCATION

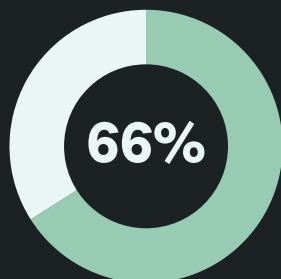
People feel generally informed,
but there are knowledge gaps.

Overall Understanding:

85%

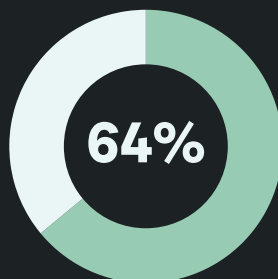
Feel informed about how to safely coexist with apex predators, but when asked about specific management approaches, gaps in knowledge were highlighted.

Understanding Specific
Management Approaches:



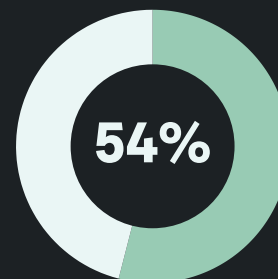
Understand Non-lethal Deterrents

(tools or methods used to discourage animals without killing them)



Understand Exclusion Tools

(physical barriers or measures to keep animals away from people or property)



Understand Lethal Control

(killing the animal)

People feel they understand coexistence in general, but there is a clear gap between knowing that coexistence matters and understanding the tools that make it possible. Generally, people feel informed on how to safely coexist; however, when it comes to the specifics of managing conflicts, confidence was much lower across the board.

EDUCATION

The knowledge gap is wider among younger adults.

The next generation of people living, working, and recreating in shared landscapes may have less confidence in how to behave around apex predators.

Information Gap:

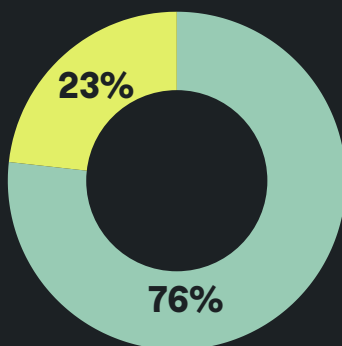
18-34 year olds

Feel significantly less informed about how to behave around apex predators.

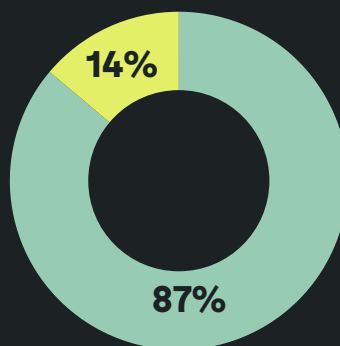
Understanding How to Safely Coexist:

- Feel very/somewhat informed
- Feel not very/not at all informed

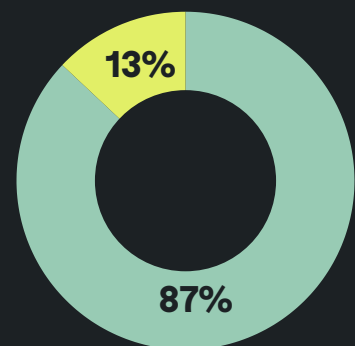
Aged 18-34



Aged 35-54



Aged 55+



RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Many lack a clear understanding of how to behave in a real-world encounter. Start earlier. Build practical coexistence education into schools, outdoor recreation, camps, and youth programming.

Perceptions



People believe humans are responsible for most conflicts

87% believe conflicts with apex predators are usually caused by human behaviour

EDUCATION

More than 70% of people believe humans and apex predators can successfully coexist.

People believe in coexistence:

Across species, there is strong support for coexistence with **over 70%** believing that we can successfully share landscapes with apex predators.

Over 80% of people strongly believe that although there is risk present, it can be managed responsibly.
Over 50% of people agreeing that people should learn to live alongside apex predators.



Overall sentiment reflects openness to coexistence and non-lethal approaches. It is worth noting that recent media coverage of grizzly bear incidents during the fielding period may have influenced perceptions and responses related to this species.

PERCEPTIONS

People's opinions about apex predators are slowly changing.

Perceptions Now vs 5 Years Ago:

- More positive
- Stayed about the same
- More negative



Over the past 5 years there is a slight positive increase in residents views of apex predators, particularly for black bears and wolves. However, for grizzly bears and cougars, the shift to more negative views is almost as high as those with more positive views. This suggests an opportunity to address misconceptions with better education and increased non-lethal pre-emptive conflict management.

PERCEPTIONS

Most people believe that humans are responsible for conflict with apex predators.

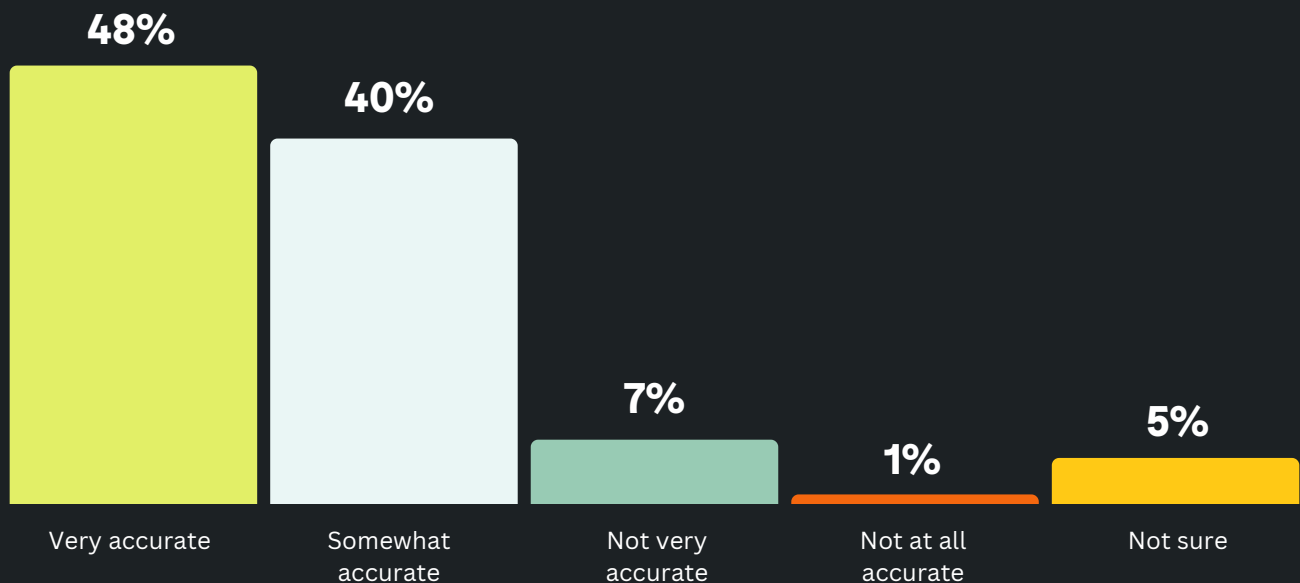
Accurate Percetion:

Residents were asked to state how accurate they believe the following statement to be:

“Conflicts with apex predators are usually caused by human behaviour”

88%

Of people agree that humans are usually responsible for conflict.



Respondents place primary responsibility on people, not predators. Many frame conflict as a result of human encroachment on the natural habitat of wildlife, poor attractant management, and lack of respect for wildlife.

PERCEPTIONS

Extreme or fear-driven narratives are not widely held.

Stronger Control:

Less than 10% of people believe that apex predators are a dangerous problem that needs stronger control

4%

Black Bears



6%

Wolves



8%

Cougars



9%

Grizzly Bears



Common Misconceptions:

10%

Believe apex predators frequently attack humans.

8%

Believe most encounters between humans and apex predators result in injury

31%

Believe living near apex predators is more dangerous today than it was in the past.

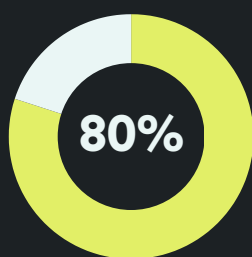
Common misconceptions, such as frequent attacks or the need for lethal control, are rejected by most, suggesting attitudes are not driven by misinformation alone. As we have seen from the research; exposure and familiarity influence attitudes and perceptions. Education presents an opportunity to reduce fear-driven misconceptions across populations with lower exposure.

PERCEPTIONS

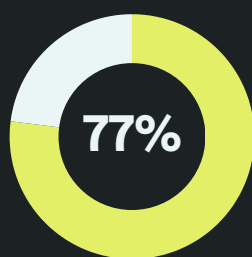
People understand that apex predators are often misunderstood and serious incidents are rare.

Apex predators are often misunderstood:

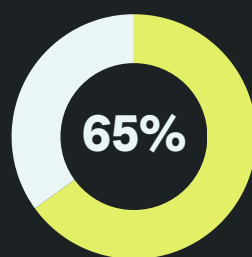
Across all species, the majority of residents believe that apex predators are often misunderstood.



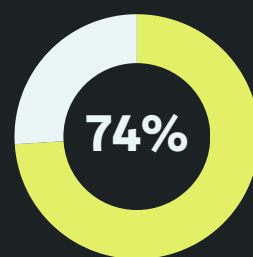
Black Bears



Wolves



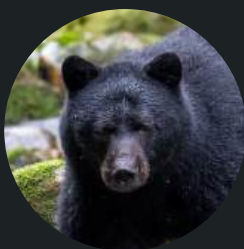
Cougars



Grizzly Bears

Serious incidents are rare:

The large majority of residents recognize that serious incidents are rare across all species.



84%

Black Bears



85%

Wolves



79%

Cougars



77%

Grizzly Bears

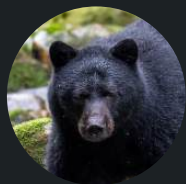
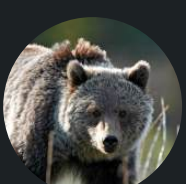
Good will towards apex predators is high and there is clear understanding among the majority that incidents are rare and animal behaviour is often misinterpreted. This belief is echoed in the residents belief that most conflict is avoidable and caused by humans.

PERCEPTIONS

Percieved threat and emotional response are not the same.

The Contrast:

The numbers suggest a persons percieved threat does not match their predicted emotional response.

		Fearful Response		Very High Threat/ Moderate Threat		Calm Response		Low Threat/ No Real Threat
	Black Bears	49%	vs	34%		29%	vs	66%
	Wolves	56%	vs	31%		21%	vs	69%
	Cougars	75%	vs	48%		12%	vs	51%
	Grizzly Bears	80%	vs	52%		11%	vs	47%

What's interesting here is that in every case, the percieved emotional response to a threat is higher than the actual percieved threat, while the percieved calm response is drastically lower despite the often higher lack of percieved threat. Education and exposure are likely influencial here.

Encounters

ENCOUNTERS

Wildlife encounters are part of everyday life for many people.

Rural Residents:

84%

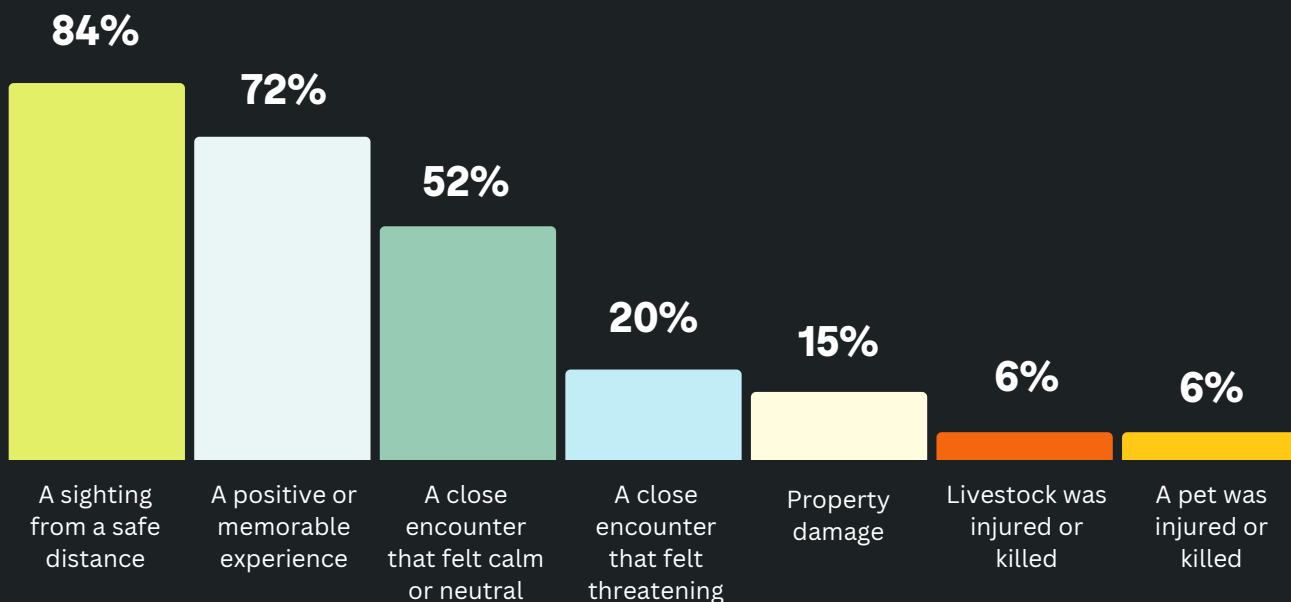
Rural residents report an encounter compared to 70% of urban residents.

Highest Exposure:

80%

Male residents over 55 in rural areas of BC report the most encounters.

Personal Encounters With Apex Predators:

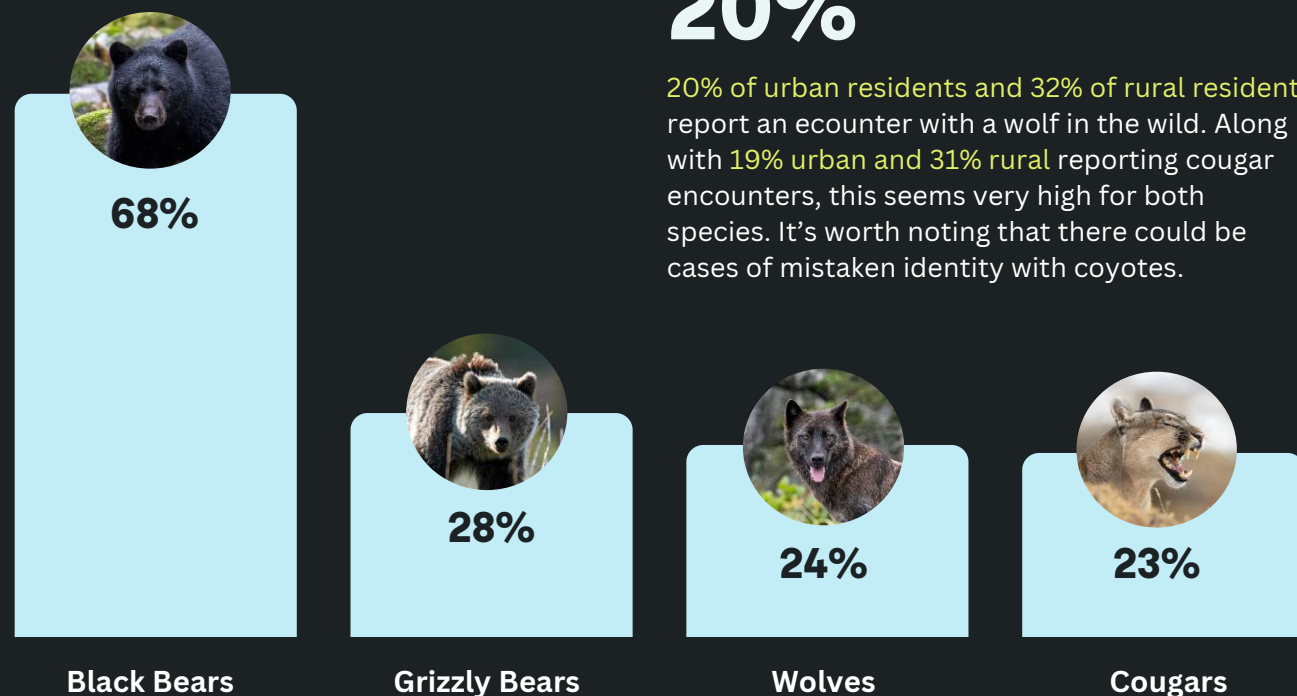


The most common wildlife experience is simply seeing wildlife. Experiences are largely limited to sightings and positive or neutral encounters, while more serious incidents such as threatening encounters or damage are less common and more often reported second-hand rather than through direct experience.

ENCOUNTERS

Wildlife sightings and the potential for mistaken identity.

Encounters in the Wild:



Mistaken Identity:

20%

20% of urban residents and 32% of rural residents report an encounter with a wolf in the wild. Along with 19% urban and 31% rural reporting cougar encounters, this seems very high for both species. It's worth noting that there could be cases of mistaken identity with coyotes.

Correct identification of wildlife makes a big difference when considering the appropriate and safest action to take. Education can play a huge part here in assisting residents with identification tools. Another point of interest is in how these encounters are documented by residents and what, if any, information is shared, and with whom.

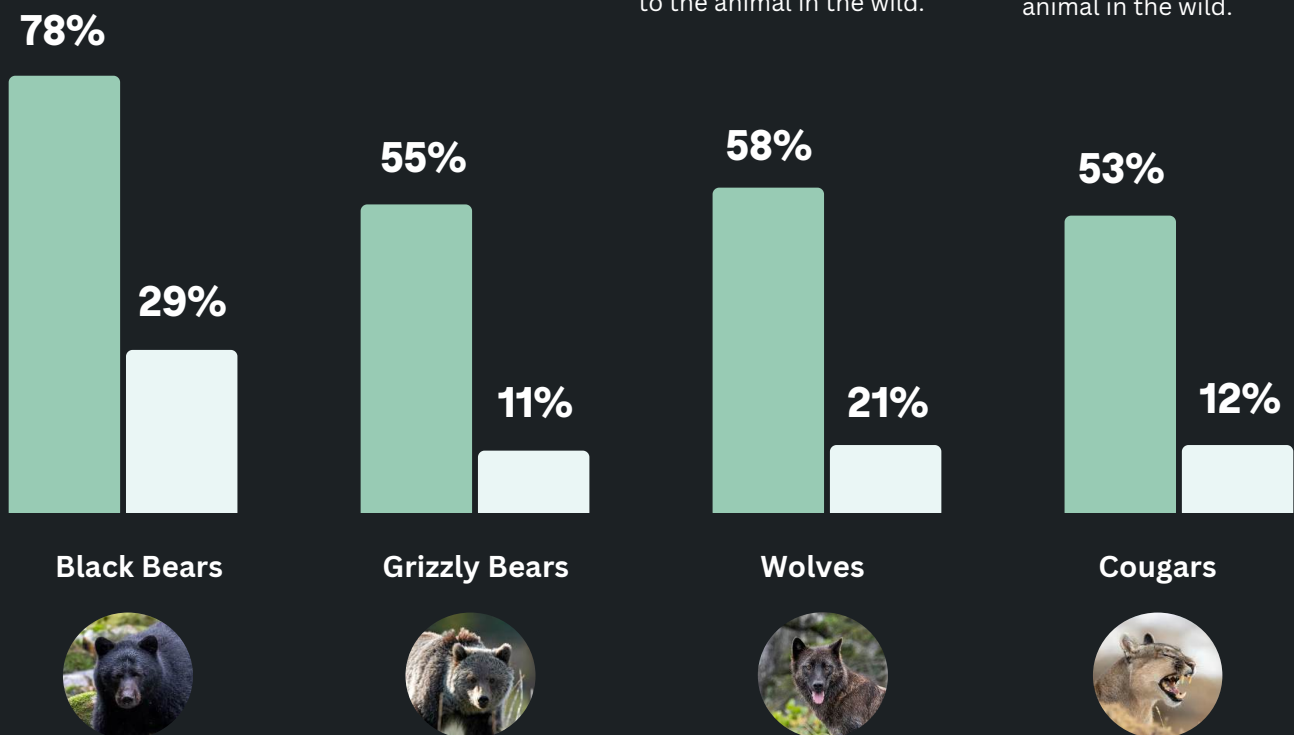
ENCOUNTERS

Confident responses may encourage calmer reactions to encounters in the wild.

Responses and reactions:

● Would feel confident knowing how to respond to the animal in the wild.

● Would predict feeling calm if encountering this animal in the wild.



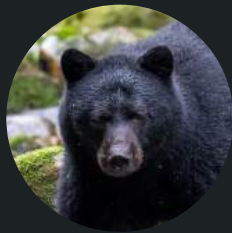
It's interesting to see that black bears; the animal residents have received the highest levels of education in and have highest exposure to, also has the highest predications of confidence and calm. This further demonstrates the value of education and awareness to increase response knowledge and calmer reactions.

ENCOUNTERS

People familiar with apex predators are likely to feel more than twice as calm.

Predicated Calm Response to an Encounter:

Residents who live/spend time in apex predator regions report feeling more than 50% calmer during an encounter.



Black Bears



Wolves



Cougars



Grizzly Bears

Live/spend time in apex predator regions:

32%

vs

Do not live/spend time in apex predator regions:

12%

23%

vs

11%

14%

vs

5%

12%

vs

4%

Exposure to apex predators shapes perception and confidence. Lived experience often leads to respect rather than alarm. Respondents with direct rural or backcountry experience often describe a calm, matter-of-fact relationship with apex predators. Familiarity does not eliminate risk but it may reduce uncertainty about what an encounter means and how to respond.

Conflict management



People support non-lethal conflict management

80% support non-lethal measures. Only 4% of people support hunters killing grizzly bears to manage conflict.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

People want conflict prevention and non-lethal management.

The majority of respondents believe conflicts can be prevented and resolved without killing apex predators. Even species perceived as higher-risk such as grizzly bears and cougars have strong support for coexistence.

Residents point to education, clear guidance, and land-use planning as the most effective ways to reduce human-wildlife conflict, with species-specific nuances such as managing attractants for black bears.

While there is broad support for non-lethal approaches, it's not without limits. A large share of comments do emphasize coexistence, relocation, prevention, and deterrence over killing. At the same time, some still make room for lethal intervention in exceptional circumstances, suggesting support for non-lethal approaches is strong but not absolute.



Three quarters of respondents still believe non-lethal conflict resolution is possible.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

People believe conflicts can be prevented and reduced without using lethal methods.

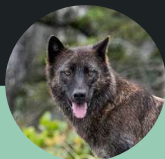
Conflict Prevention:

Most people believe conflicts can usually be prevented across all species.



88%

Black Bears



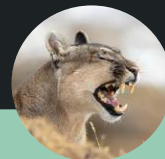
82%

Wolves



78%

Grizzly Bears



73%

Cougars

Prevention without lethal methods:

Across species, residents believe that human-wildlife conflict can be reduced without lethal methods. Instead, they favour education.

85%

Black Bears

80%

Wolves

75%

Grizzly Bears

75%

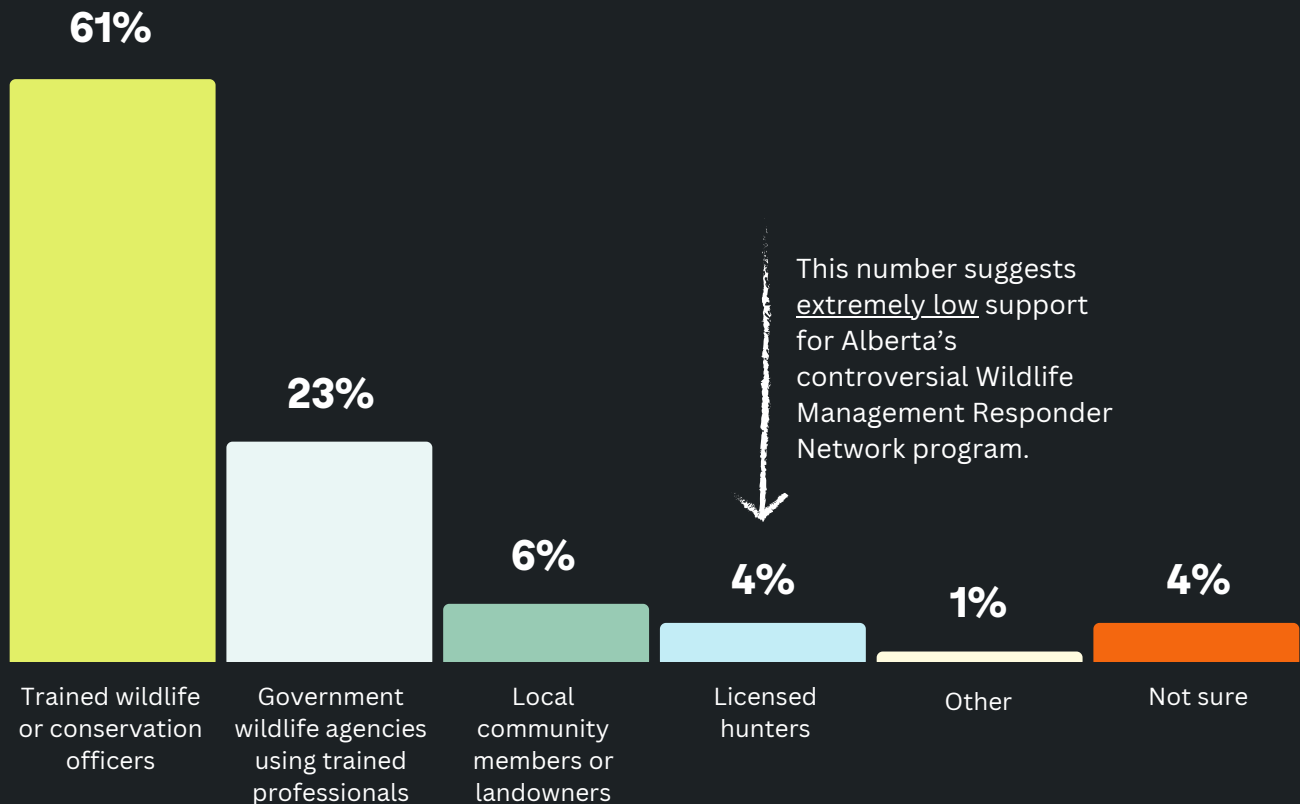
Cougars

There is strong support for non-lethal conflict prevention and residents believe conflict can be prevented without killing animals. Residents of Alberta are more confident than those of BC that conflicts can be resolved without lethal measures.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

People want trained professionals to respond to human-wildlife conflict.

Who Should Be Responsible for Conflict Management:



When it comes to responsibility, there is a clear expectation that trained wildlife professionals, rather than the public, should take the lead in managing wildlife conflict. This data shows a clear need for increased funding and support for conservation officials (BC Conservation Officer Service/AB Fish and Wildlife officers) through adequate staffing, training, equipment and resources across both provinces.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

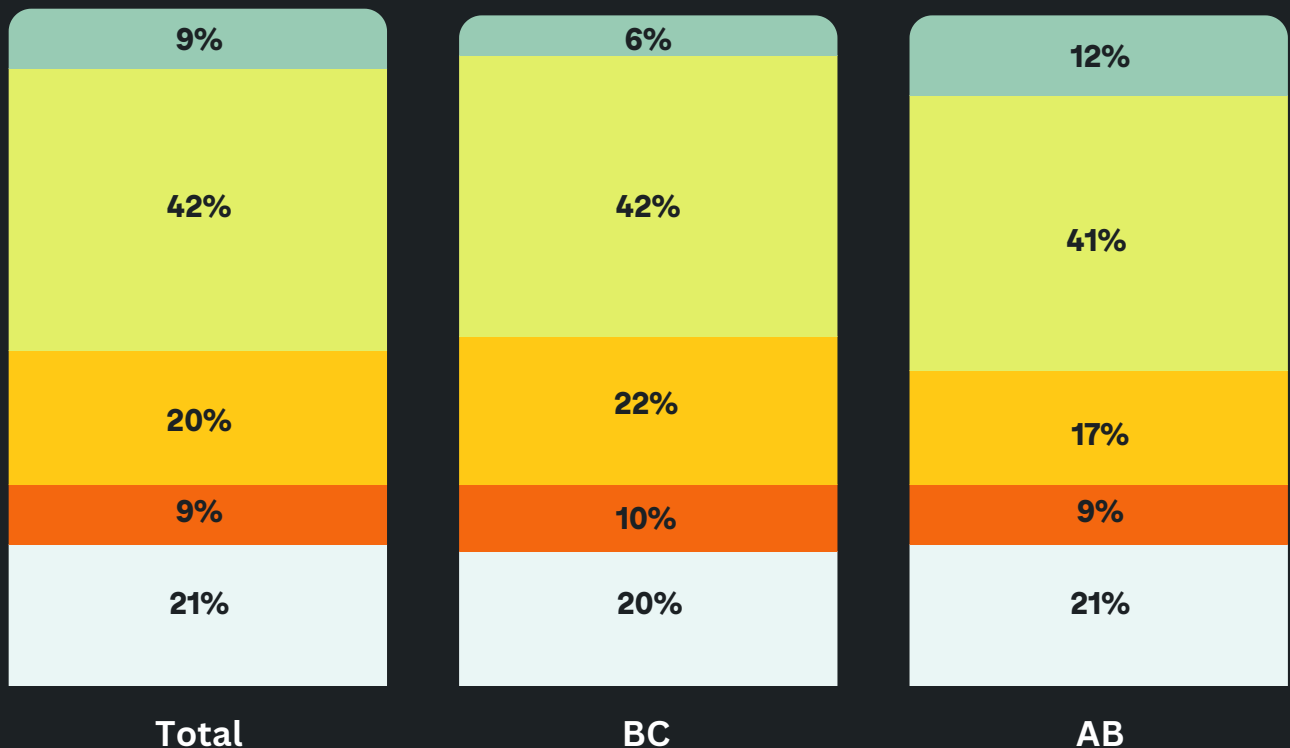
There is room to build trust in wildlife management.

Confidence in Government:

50%

Say their provincial government manages apex predators very or somewhat well. 50% disagree.

- Very well
- Somewhat well
- Not very well
- Not well at all
- I don't know enough to say

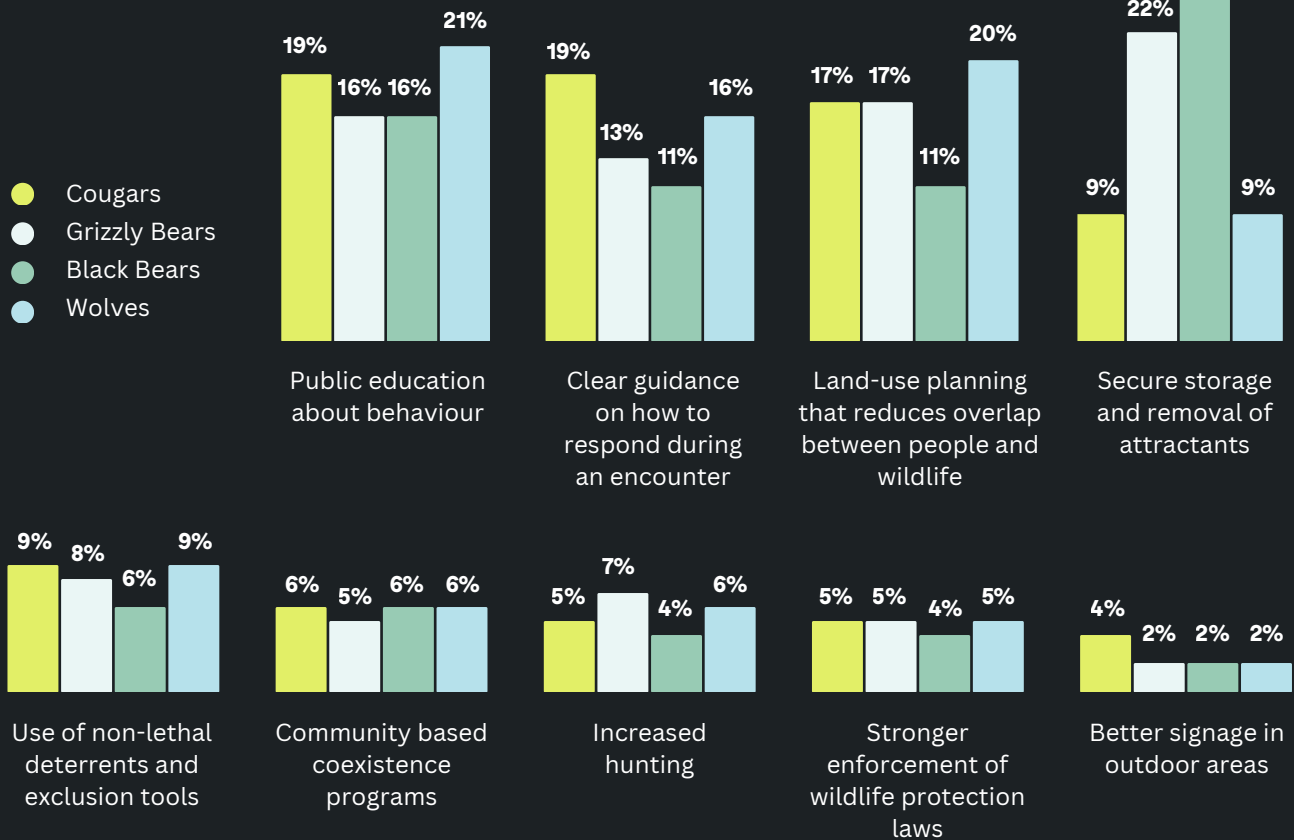


There is moderate confidence in government management with about half of residents feeling governments manage apex predators well, though a notable minority express concerns or uncertainty. There is a slightly stronger confidence in Alberta than BC and urban residents are more likely than rural residents to agree that the provincial government manages apex predators well.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Education and prevention are seen as the most effective ways to reduce conflict.

Most effective methods to reduce human-wildlife conflict:



Residents point to education, clear guidance, and land-use planning as the most effective ways to reduce human-wildlife conflict, with species-specific nuances such as managing attractants for black bears. Confidence is high that conflicts can be reduced without lethal methods across all species, reinforcing strong support for prevention-focused and non-lethal strategies.

Grizzly bears



GRIZZLY BEARS



Key metrics.

73%

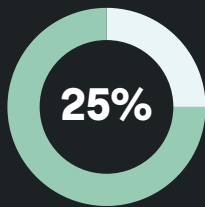
High Confidence in Coexistence

73% strongly/somewhat agree that humans & grizzly bears can safely co-exist.

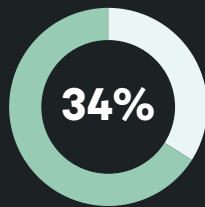
75%

High Support for Non-Lethal Management

75% are confident conflicts can be resolved without killing the animal.



Urban
Residents



Rural
Residents

Rarely Encountered

25% of urban residents and 34% of rural residents across BC and Alberta believe they have, at some point, encountered a grizzly bear in the wild. Black bears are very often mistaken for grizzly bears.

11%

Lowest Confidence in Calm Response

11% hypothetically say they would feel calm when encountering a grizzly bear in the wild. This is the lowest confidence reported.

73%

Grizzly Bears Are Often Misunderstood

73% strongly/somewhat agree that grizzly bears are often misunderstood.

43%

High Perceived Risk

34% perceive grizzly bears as a risk, and 9% perceive them as dangerous.



GRIZZLY BEARS

Residents support coexistence for grizzly bears even with perceived risk.

WHAT THE NUMBERS TELL US

Comparitively, grizzly bears are perceived as the highest-risk and most emotionally charged species. Fear responses are strongest across provincial lines, and residents require more support in understanding how to coexist safely.

What is notable, however, is that despite slightly higher levels of perceived risk, residents still broadly support non-lethal and prevention-based approaches. This suggests that there is no real resistance to coexistence itself, but a lack of practical awareness and education of coexistence in practice.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Build public confidence in coexistence through practical prevention, transparent conflict management, and relatable stories/examples that demonstrate where coexistence is working.

Black bears

BLACK BEARS



Key metrics.

87%

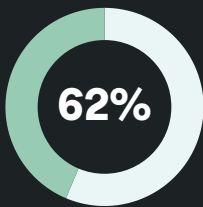
Highest Confidence in Coexistence

87% believe that humans & black bears can safely co-exist.

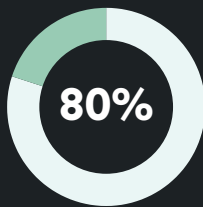
85%

Highest Support for Non-Lethal Management

85% are confident conflicts can be resolved without killing the animal.



Urban
Residents



Rural
Residents

Most Encountered

Of the four, black bears are the most encountered in the wild. 62% of urban residents and 80% of rural residents across BC and Alberta have at some point, encountered a black bear in the wild.

29%

Highest Confidence in Calm Response

Seen as the least threatening, 29% hypothetically say they would feel calm when encountering a black bear in the wild.

79%

Highly Confident Black Bears are Misunderstood

Black bears are perceived as the most misunderstood. 79% strongly/somewhat agree that black bears are often misunderstood.

36%

Lowest Perceived Risk

Black bears carry the lowest perceived risk, tied with wolves. 32% perceive black bears as a risk, and 4% perceive them as dangerous.



Residents of Alberta are more likely than residents of BC to have a more **positive perception** of black bears.



BLACK BEARS

Black bears offer a strong model for coexistence.

WHAT THE NUMBERS TELL US

Black bears represent the most successful model of coexistence in the public mindset. High encounter rates combined with relatively low perceived risk indicate that residents have developed a level of comfort and familiarity that reduces fear. Black bears are seen as manageable, predictable, and responsive to human behaviour.

Importantly, practical knowledge is strongest for black bears, particularly around attractant management. This suggests that repeated exposure, combined with clear and widely communicated guidance, has translated into both understanding and behaviour. In many ways, black bears provide a proof point that coexistence can work when knowledge is accessible and consistently reinforced.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Build on existing familiarity with black bears by sharing and providing practical prevention and attractant-management strategies that communities can use to reduce conflict.

Wolves

WOLVES



Key metrics.

82%

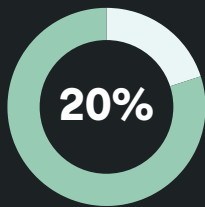
Very High Confidence in Coexistence

82% strongly/somewhat agree that humans & wolves can safely co-exist.

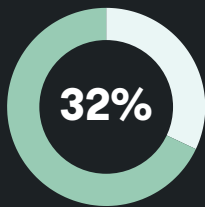
80%

Very Strong Support for Non-Lethal Management

80% are confident conflicts can be resolved without killing the animal.



Urban
Residents



Rural
Residents

Rarely Encountered

Wolves are the second least encountered animal in the wild by just 1%. 20% of urban residents and 32% of rural residents across BC and Alberta believe they have at some point encountered a wolf in the wild. Encounter rates are relatively high and may reflect confusion with coyotes or dogs.

21%

High Confidence in Calm Response

21% hypothetically say they would feel calm when encountering a wolf in the wild.

77%

Confident Wolves are Misunderstood

77% believe that wolves are often misunderstood.

36%

Lowest Perceived Risk

Wolves carry the lowest perceived risk, tied with black bears. Just 30% perceive wolves as a risk, and 6% perceive wolves as dangerous.

**WOLVES**

Taking wolves from conceptual to practical coexistence.

WHAT THE NUMBERS TELL US

Wolves occupy a more abstract space in residents' perceptions. They are widely recognized for their ecological importance and are not seen as a major direct threat, yet they are also less connected to everyday experience. Lower encounter rates mean that perceptions are shaped more by general beliefs and societal narrative than by scientific evidence or personal interaction.

As a result, wolves benefit from strong conceptual support for coexistence, but this support is somewhat detached from lived reality. They are not feared in the same way as grizzly bears or cougars, but they are also not as well understood in practical terms. This creates a dynamic where attitudes are positive, but less grounded in behaviour or direct experience.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Use education and storytelling to make wolf behaviour, encounters and coexistence more familiar and relatable to the public.

Cougars

**Cougars Present the Greatest
Opportunity for Education.**

COUGARS



Key metrics.

75%

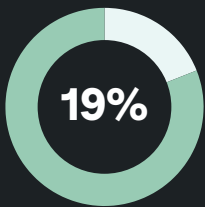
High Confidence in Coexistence

75% strongly/somewhat agree that humans & cougars can safely co-exist.

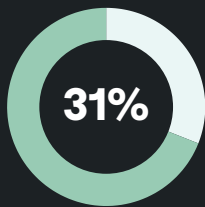
75%

High Support for Non-Lethal Management

75% are confident conflicts can be resolved without killing the animal.



Urban
Residents



Rural
Residents

Least Encountered

Cougars are the least encountered animal in the wild. Just 19% of urban residents and 31% of rural residents across BC and Alberta have at some point, encountered a cougar in the wild.

37%

Low Awareness of Correct Response to Encounters

Just 37% responded correctly on how to respond to a cougar encounter in the wild. There were more incorrect than correct answers across all groups.

12%

Lowest Confidence in Calm Response

Only 12% hypothetically say they would feel calm when encountering a cougar in the wild.

65%

Confident Cougars are Misunderstood

65% strongly/somewhat agree that cougars are often misunderstood.

44%

Highest Perceived Risk

36% perceive cougars as a risk, and 8% perceive cougars as dangerous.



COUGARS

Cougars present the greatest opportunity for education.

WHAT THE NUMBERS TELL US

Cougars sit at a point of tension between familiarity and uncertainty. Residents generally accept that coexistence is possible and that conflicts can be prevented, yet they lack confidence in their ability to respond effectively in an encounter. This creates a gap between belief and behaviour, where people conceptually support coexistence but may not feel equipped to act on it.

Unlike bears, cougars are less visible and more elusive, which likely contributes to this uncertainty. They are not the most feared species, but they carry a level of unpredictability that keeps risk perceptions elevated. The research identifies an opportunity for targeted education that could increase confidence and encourage behaviour change.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Clear, species-specific prevention & encounter guidance should be widely available to people living and spending time in cougar country.

Comparisons

COMPARISONS

There are more similarities than differences for AB and BC.

Both Provinces Recognize the Importance of Apex Predators:

96%

BC

95%

AB

Agree that apex predators are an important part of healthy ecosystems.

Both See a Leading Role for Prevention:

91%

Overall

The majority in both provinces, 91% overall, believe most encounters can be avoided through the right knowledge and behaviour.

Both Support Non-Lethal Conflict Resolution:

69 - 88%

Across all four species, 69–88% of respondents are confident conflicts can be resolved without killing the animal.

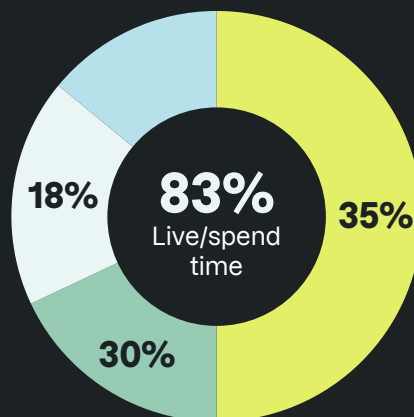
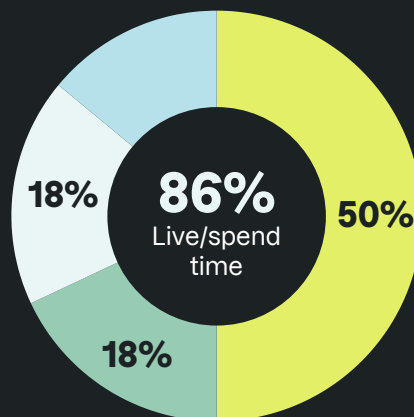
Despite some differences in perceived risk, the research shows considerable common ground between the two provinces. The foundations for coexistence are shared across provincial borders. The differences point to where communication and policy may need to be adapted locally, rather than requiring completely different approaches.

COMPARISONS

Provincial differences.

Time Outdoors:

- Live near
- Spend time
- Both
- Neither



Share Landscape:

Live/spend time in areas shared with:

Black Bears



91%

Cougars



83%

Wolves



46%

Grizzly Bears



33%

Black Bears



80%

Cougars



77%

Wolves



61%

Grizzly Bears

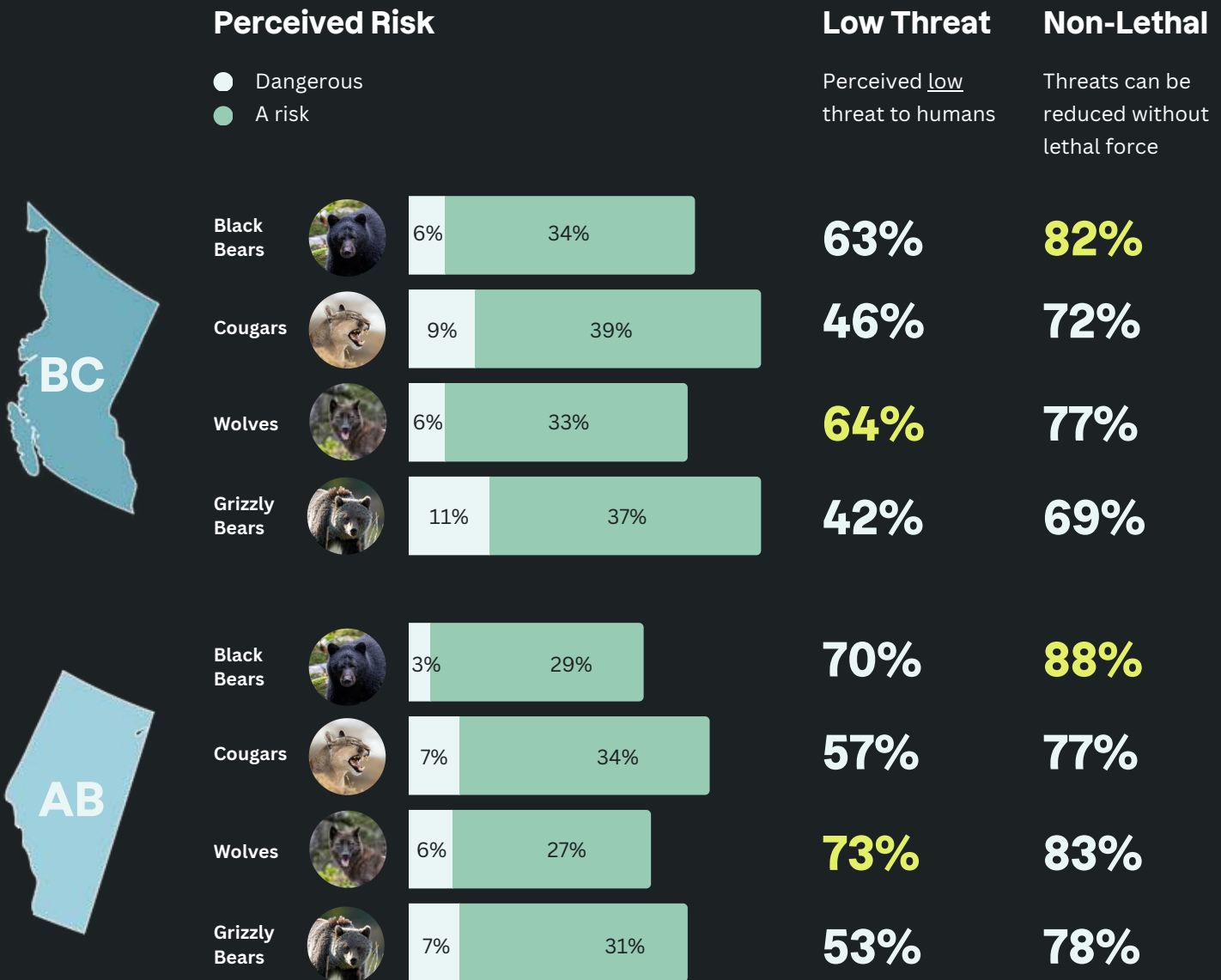


49%

The data suggests that residents from BC spend more time in shared landscapes with black bears and wolves compared to Albertans, but Albertans report higher numbers for cougars and grizzly bears. British Columbians are more likely to perceive all four species as a risk in comparison to Albertans.

COMPARISONS

Provincial differences.



Support for non-lethal conflict management is higher across the board in Alberta, even for the species seen as higher risk. Albertan residents also perceive all species as less of a threat to humans than residents in BC. They also view all four animals and as presenting less risk.

COMPARISONS

What the differences mean for Alberta and BC.

Perceptions in BC are consistently more risk-oriented and emotionally charged, suggesting a population that is more sensitized to the presence of apex predators. Residents are more likely to interpret these animals through a lens of potential danger, even while still acknowledging their ecological role. This points to a mindset where coexistence is accepted in principle, but not fully internalized in practice.

In contrast, Alberta residents demonstrate a more normalized relationship with apex predators. Lower perceived risk and higher confidence in management suggest that predators are more often seen as part of the expected landscape rather than an emerging concern. This may reflect greater familiarity with existing management approaches, which can create a sense that risks are understood and controlled.

At a deeper level, the difference appears to be less about awareness and more about interpretation of risk. BC residents appear more cautious, while Alberta residents appear more pragmatic and experience-driven. This distinction has important implications for coexistence programming.



Albertan residents have slightly stronger confidence in government management.

COMPARISONS

Differences between urban and rural residents.

There aren't quite as many differences as some might expect. Overall, the urban-rural divide reflects a gap in experience and confidence rather than a fundamental difference in beliefs about apex predators.

Rural residents report significantly higher levels of direct experience across all species, including a broader range of encounters from sightings to more serious interactions.

This greater exposure translates into higher self-reported understanding of how to coexist for rural residents, as well as stronger familiarity with both non-lethal and lethal management approaches.

At the same time, rural residents are more critical of government management, indicating that those with the most direct exposure also have higher expectations and greater scrutiny of current approaches.

Despite differences in experience, perceived threat levels are largely similar between urban and rural residents, suggesting risk perceptions are shaped more by general narratives than lived experience.



Urban residents have more faith in government management than rural residents.

Opportunities



People are willing to change their behaviours

79% are likely to change their
behaviour with clear guidance.

OPPORTUNITIES

Support coexistence through practical community based education.

The basic case for coexistence is already widely understood. The bigger opportunity is helping people understand how to coexist in practical terms.

MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE

Many residents call for more practical, proactive education, especially around how to behave in predator areas, how to prevent encounters, and how to respond safely if one occurs. Several suggest this should start early and be built into schools, campgrounds, signage, or public awareness materials.

With a large portion of people willing to adapt behaviours with access to the right information, there is huge opportunity to leverage early, consistent education that offers practical support to communities.

Effective coexistence programs should be designed around the realities of the communities using them, while ensuring everyone has access to the same core knowledge about living safely with wildlife.

OPPORTUNITIES

Support coexistence through non-lethal and transparent management.

Across both provinces, trust in government management of apex predators is not strong, with many feeling current management is too reactive.

MAKE MANAGEMENT MORE TRANSPARENT

Government management is not viewed as a clear success story by the majority. There is also a sizeable group who either feel management is poor or do not know enough to judge. In order to address this, steps should be taken to explain how decisions are made, what prevention has been attempted, and what happens before lethal intervention is considered.

Also, there is extremely low support for the government use of hunters in conflict management. Publicly funded programs such as aerial gunning and the Wildlife Management Responder Network should be reassessed to mirror public support.

Respondents place primary responsibility for conflicts on people, not predators. A recurring sentiment is frustration that wildlife often pays the price for human mistakes. Respondents frequently criticize governments and conservation responses as overly lethal, delayed, or not sufficiently focused on prevention.

When asked for comments, a large share of residents emphasized the importance of coexistence, relocation, prevention, and deterrence over killing.

Explore

LEARN MORE

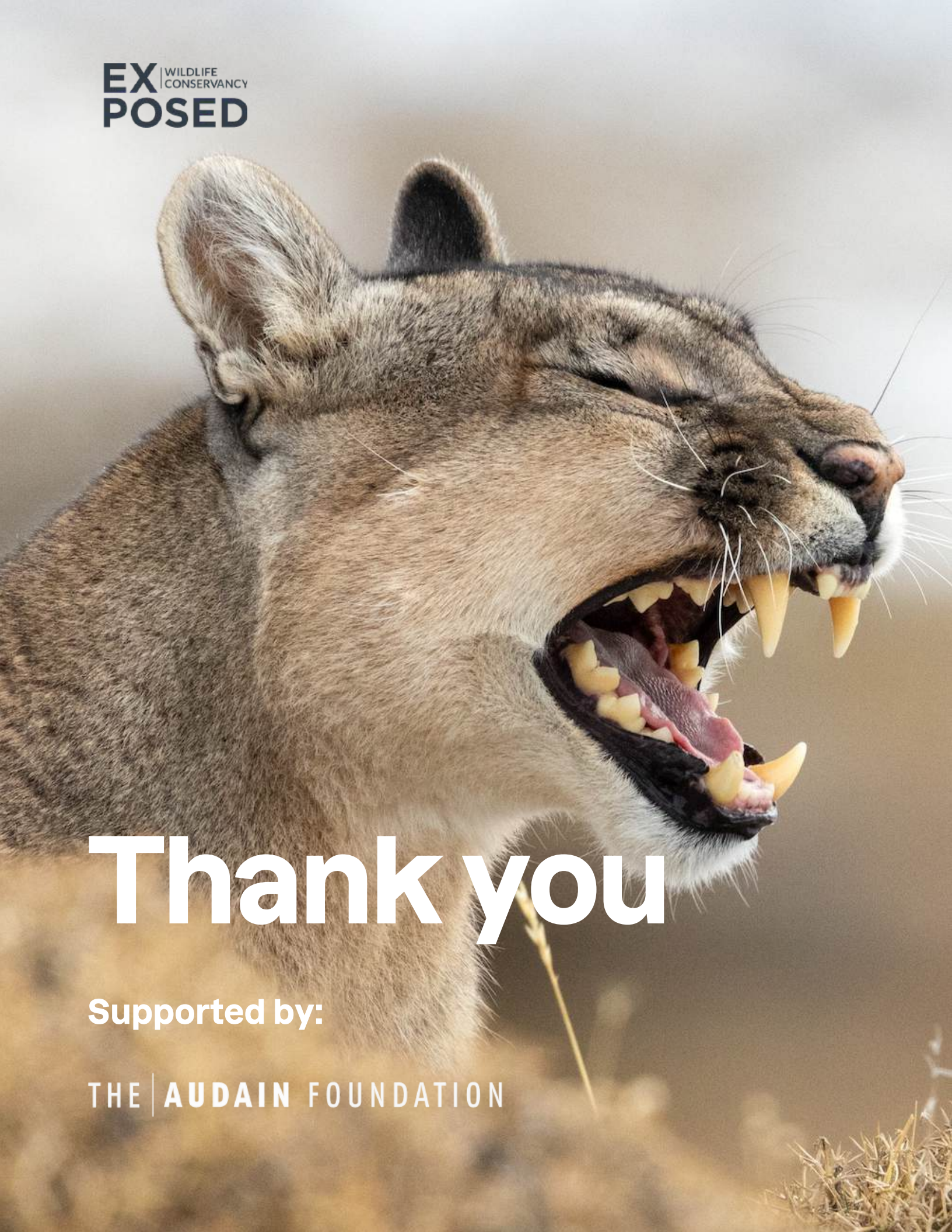
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