



ENVIRONICS  
RESEARCH



# **Public opinion about oil and gas, shipping and caribou protection in Canada's North**

**World Wildlife Fund-Canada**

**August 16, 2019**

# Objectives and methodology

World Wildlife Fund-Canada was interested in understanding the views of Canadians in the provinces and territories about oil and gas drilling and shipping activity, and protection of barren-ground caribou, in Canada's North.

This study involved telephone interviews with Canadian adults (18+), conducted in two parts:

- N=1,011 interviews in the provinces between May 13-19, 2019, involving only on the oil and gas questions.
- N=1,000 interviews between June 7 and July 8, 2019 as part of Environics' *North of 60 and Remote Community Monitor*, which includes the three territories (Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut) as well as small samples in Nunavik (Northern Quebec) and Nunatsiavut (Labrador). For clarity, this is referred to as "the territories" throughout the report. All three topics were covered in these interviews.

Quotas were set by region, age, gender (in the provinces) and by Indigenous identity within region (in the territories) to ensure the final sample is representative of the respective populations, according to the most recent Census data.

- The margin of sampling error for a sample of 1,000 is plus or minus 3.1 percentage points, at the 95% confidence level.
- In this report, results are expressed as percentages unless otherwise noted. Results may not add to 100% due to rounding or multiple responses.
- For certain questions, the findings are compared with a 2016 WWF-Canada survey of 153 residents of the territories.

# Summary

## Oil and gas drilling in Canada's Arctic oceans

- A solid majority of Canadians in both the provinces (58%) and territories (65%) want the current federal government ban on new oil and gas licenses extended by another five years to 2026. Views are more divided about a permanent ban on oil and gas drilling in Canada's Arctic, with half who support it.
- More than six in ten Canadians say Canada should not allow drilling for Arctic oil because of environmental harms; prioritizing the economic benefits of drilling is a minority position (held by roughly three in ten) more commonly expressed in the Western provinces and the Northwest Territories.
- Canadians express a consensus view that the federal government should establish strict safety and environmental protection standards and that drilling must avoid ecologically sensitive marine areas.

## Shipping traffic in Canada's Arctic (asked in Territories only)

- Few residents of the territories (24%) say their community is well prepared for an oil spill from a ship.
- Residents generally believe that restricting where ship discharge can be dumped, restricting travel areas and requiring use of cleaner fuels are all effective ways to limit environmental harm to Canada's Arctic from shipping.

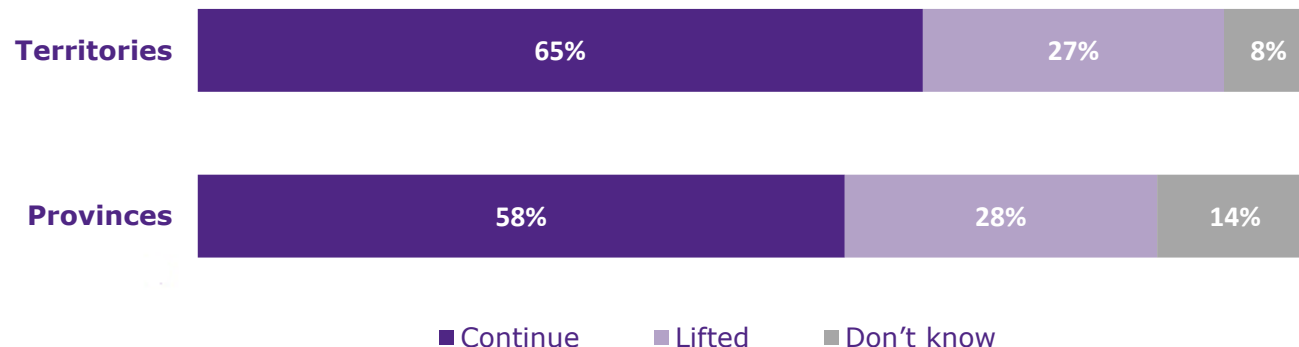
# Summary (continued)

## Caribou (asked in Territories only)

- A strong majority of residents of the territories continue to support making caribou calving grounds fully protected areas (87%, essentially unchanged from 2016). Supporters say it would protect a declining caribou population as well as a source of food and way of life for Inuit. The small group of opponents generally express economic arguments, including the need for jobs and that industrial development can coexist with the caribou.
- This degree of support is consistent with the view that the most effective way to protect barren-ground caribou is to protect its habitat, and more so than better management of the caribou harvest or increasing research and monitoring.
- Half of residents believe their territorial government is not doing enough to protect barren-ground caribou, while just a third believe the government is doing enough.

# **Oil and gas in Canada's Arctic oceans**

# Continue or lift ban on new oil and gas licenses in Canada's Arctic oceans

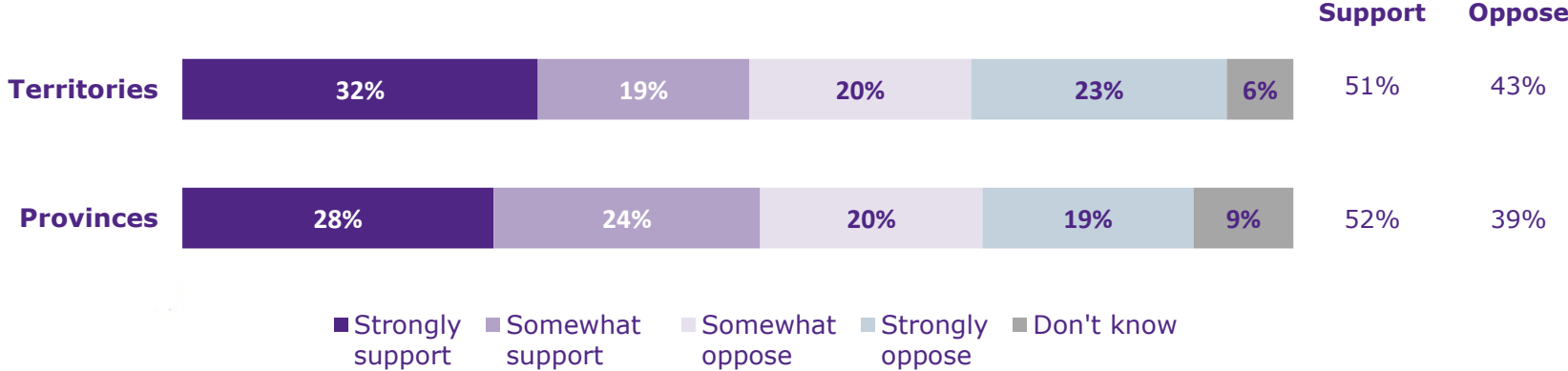


**A solid majority of Canadians in both the provinces (58%) and territories (65%) prefer the ban on new oil and gas licenses be extended to 2026.**

Preference for continuing the ban is the majority view in all regions and population segments; however, in the territories, it is stronger in Yukon (71%) and Nunavut (72%) than in the Northwest Territories (56%).

*Q1. In 2016, the federal government temporarily banned new licenses to drill for oil and gas in Canada's Arctic oceans. The ban expires in 2021, and the federal government is considering what to do next. Would you prefer to see the ban on new oil and gas licenses continue for five more years, or be lifted?*

# Support for permanent ban on offshore drilling in Canada's Arctic

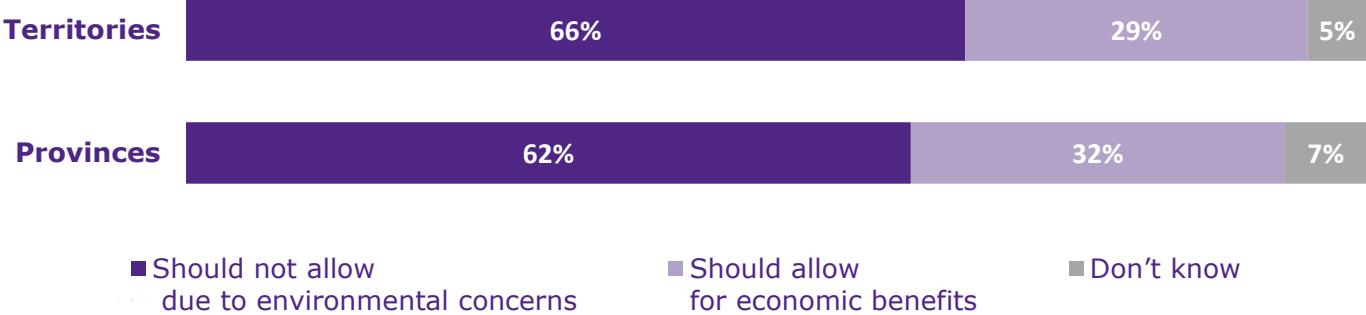


Compared to the level of support for continuing the current ban for five years, Canadians are more divided in their opinions about a permanent ban. **Half support a permanent ban on oil and gas drilling in Canada's Arctic (52% in provinces and 51% in territories)**, while four in ten are opposed (39% in the provinces and 43% in the territories).

In the provinces, support for a permanent ban is higher in the Atlantic provinces (61%); support is under 50 percent in the West (48%), among men (47%) and those aged 35-54 (48%). In the territories, support outweighs opposition in all regions except the Northwest Territories, where the opposite is true (42% support/51% oppose).

Q2. Do you support or oppose a permanent ban on all offshore oil and gas drilling in Canada's Arctic? Would you say you strongly or somewhat [support/oppose] it?

# Views about environmental vs. economic arguments related to drilling for Arctic oil



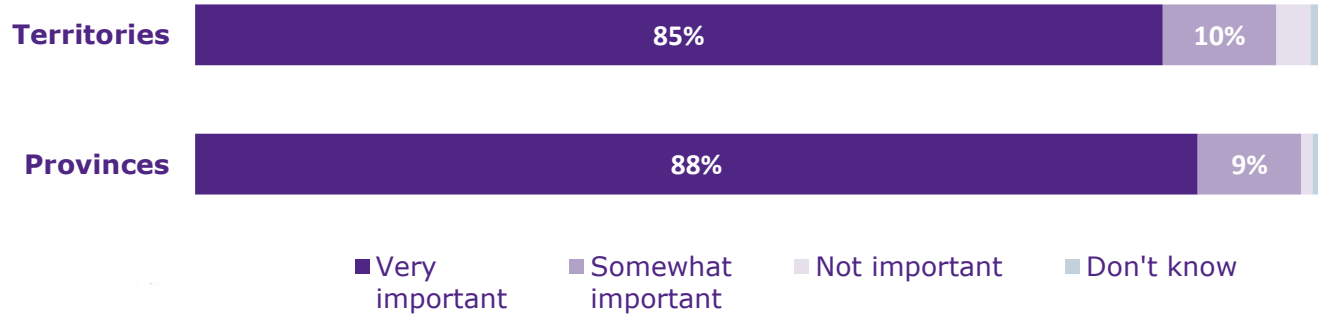
**Canadians are about twice as likely to say Canada should not allow drilling for Arctic oil due to environmental concerns (62% in provinces and 66% in the territories) as to say drilling should be allowed for its economic benefits (32% in provinces and 29% in territories).**

The view that drilling should be allowed for its economic benefits is higher in the Western provinces (40%) and the Northwest Territories (38%) than in other regions, and among men compared to women.

Q3. [Some/other] people say Canada should allow drilling for Arctic oil, because it will increase tax revenues for governments, and create jobs and boost the economy for northerners, including Inuit. B) [Some/other] people say Canada should not allow drilling for Arctic oil, because it will harm the environment, due to the potential for oil spills and for increasing the carbon emissions that impact climate change. Which of these positions is closest to your view?



# Importance of federal standards for safety and environmental protection to prevent oil spills

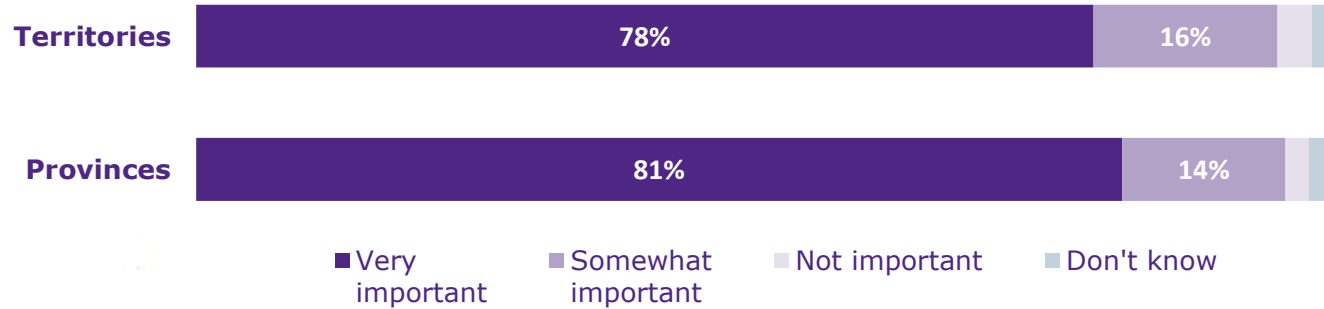


**There is widespread consensus that it is very important the federal government establishes strict safety and environmental protection standards** (88% in provinces and 85% in territories). Most of the remainder say it is somewhat important; very few feel it is unimportant or don't have an opinion.

Stating that strict standards are very important (rather than somewhat important) is more widespread among older Canadians (i.e., ~30-35 years or older) and those with more education (i.e., those with a postsecondary education in the provinces and with at least a high school diploma in the territories).

*Q4A. If oil and gas drilling in Canada's Arctic oceans were to proceed, how important do you think it is that the following requirements be put in place? That the federal government establish strict standards for safety and environmental protection, to prevent oil spills and accidents from occurring.*

# Importance of drilling activities avoiding ecologically sensitive areas



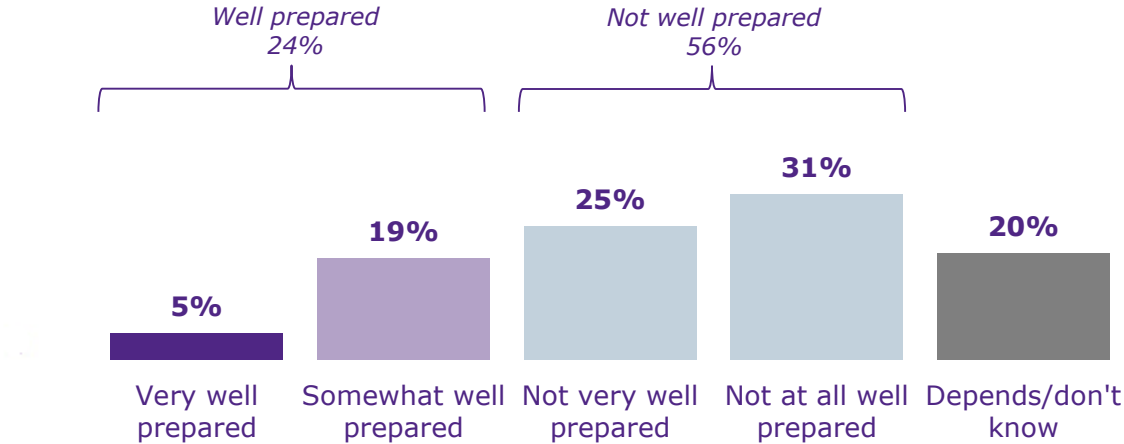
**Most Canadians also say it is very important that oil and gas drilling in Canada's Arctic oceans avoid ecologically sensitive marine areas** (81% in provinces and 78% in territories). Again, most of the remainder say it is somewhat important; very few feel it is unimportant or don't have an opinion.

As with views about government standards, belief in the strong importance of avoiding ecologically sensitive areas when drilling is higher among older Canadians and those with more education.

*Q4B. If oil and gas drilling in Canada's Arctic oceans were to proceed, how important do you think it is that the following requirements be put in place? That all drilling activities must avoid ecologically sensitive marine areas.*

# Shipping traffic in Canada's Arctic

# Community preparedness for oil spill from a ship (Territories only)

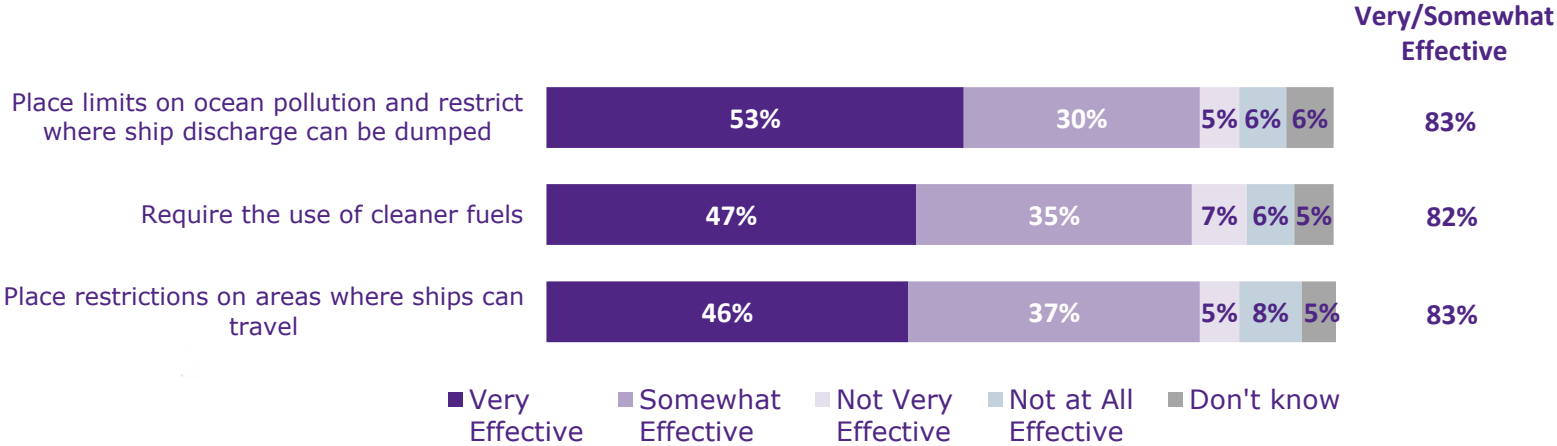


**A majority (56%) of residents of the Territories do not believe their community is prepared for an oil spill from a ship.** One-quarter (24%) feel they are prepared; the remainder (20%) aren't sure.

Across the population, the main variation is in the proportion who express uncertainty about whether their community is prepared (e.g., higher in Yukon and among those with a university education).

*Q5. Do you think your community is very, somewhat, not very or not at all well prepared for each of the following possible, unforeseen events?  
An oil spill from a ship*

# Perceived effectiveness of ways to ensure shipping does not harm the environment (Territories only)



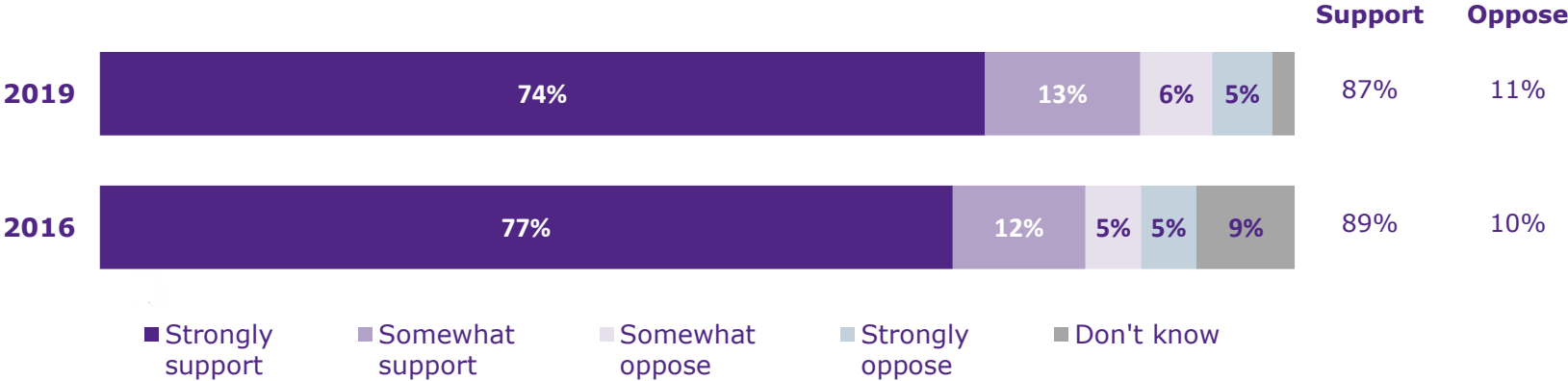
**Most residents of the Territories believe all three of these steps would effectively protect the environment from shipping in Canada’s Arctic** (in each case, more than eight in ten say they are least somewhat effective). However, slightly more faith is placed in restricting where ship discharge can be dumped (53% very effective) than about requiring use of cleaner fuels (47%) or placing restrictions on where ships can travel (46%).

Interestingly, Indigenous residents are more likely to believe cleaner fuels will be a very effective measure (51%, vs. 43 of non-Indigenous residents), while non-Indigenous residents place greater emphasis on restricting ship discharge (58%, vs. 49% of Indigenous residents).

Q6. Shipping traffic in the Arctic is increasing and is projected to increase further in the next ten years. Do you think each of the following steps is likely to be a very, somewhat, not very or not at all effective way to ensure shipping in Canada’s Arctic does not harm the environment?

**Caribou**

# Support for making caribou calving grounds fully protected areas (Territories only)

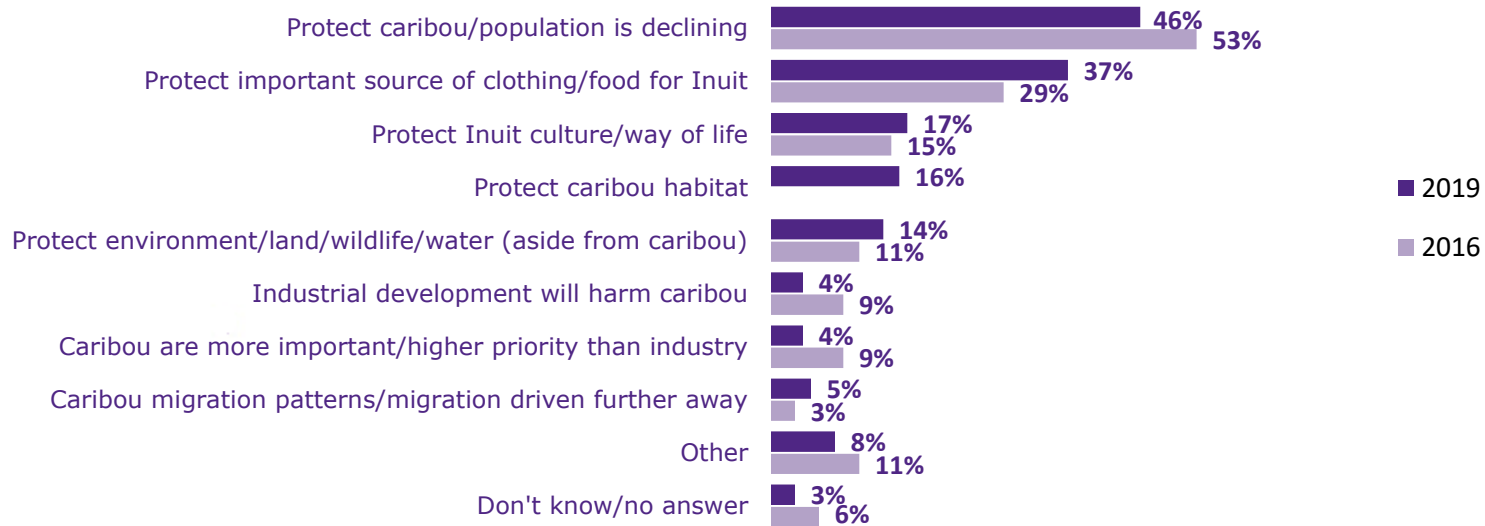


**As in 2016, most residents of the Territories (87%) support making caribou calving grounds fully protected areas** that do not allow industrial development, including three-quarters (74%) who strongly support it.

Strong support is higher among women (78%) than men (69x%), but otherwise does not vary substantially by region or other population segments.

*Q7. The next few questions are about barren-ground caribou, which migrate each year to calving grounds where they give birth to and raise their calves. Do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose making caribou calving grounds in the North fully protected areas that do not allow industrial development like oil and gas or mining projects?*

# Reasons for support for making caribou calving grounds fully protected areas (Territories only)

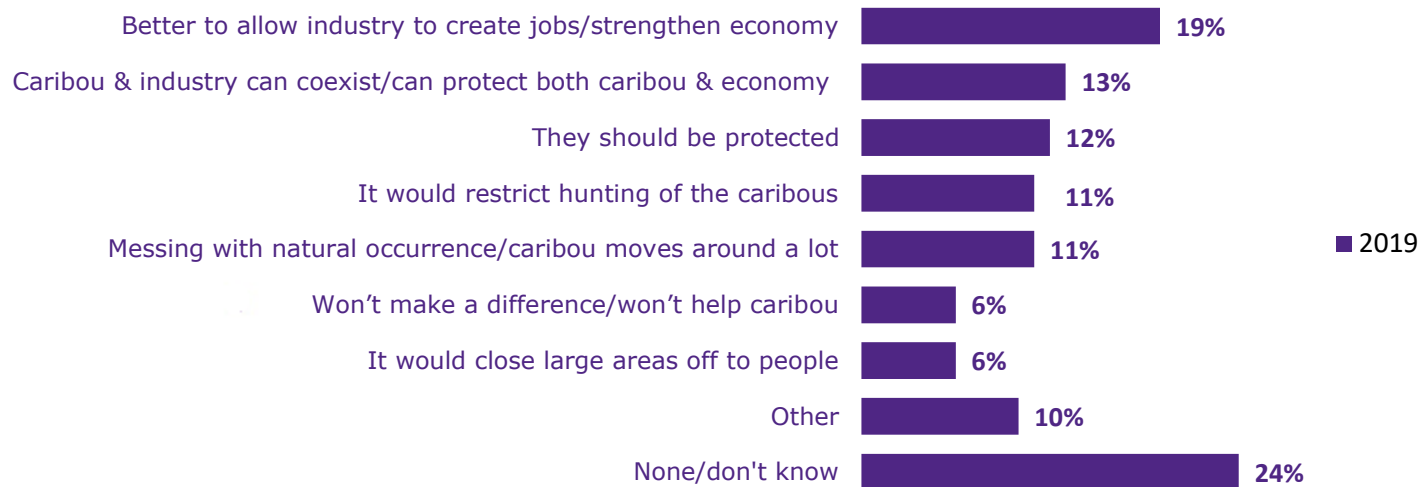


Consistent with 2016, **those who support making caribou calving grounds fully protected areas continue to give two main reasons: to protect a declining caribou population (46%) or to protect a source of food and a way of life for Inuit (54% combined)**. Concerns about protecting this source of food for Inuit and about industrial development affecting caribou migration patterns are more commonly raised by Inuit and residents of Nunavut.

Q8. Why do you support making caribou calving grounds fully protected areas? Base: Strongly or somewhat supporting making caribou calving grounds in the North fully protected areas (n=870)



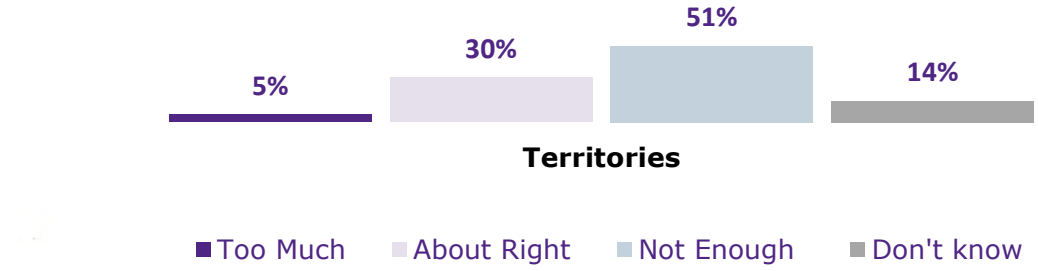
# Concerns with making caribou calving grounds fully protected areas (Territories only)



**The small group (11% of total sample) that opposes fully protected areas for caribou calving grounds give mainly economic reasons**, such as it would be better to allow industry to create jobs, or that caribou and industry can coexist. A few also raised concerns that this approach won't be effective (e.g., due to migration patterns) or will be too restrictive (e.g., for hunting, closing off large swaths of land).

*Q9. What concerns do you have about making caribou calving grounds fully protected areas? Base: Strongly or somewhat oppose making caribou calving grounds in the North fully protected areas (n=107). Note: base size in 2016 (n=14) was too small to report results).*

# Perceptions of efforts by government to protect barren-ground caribou (Territories only)

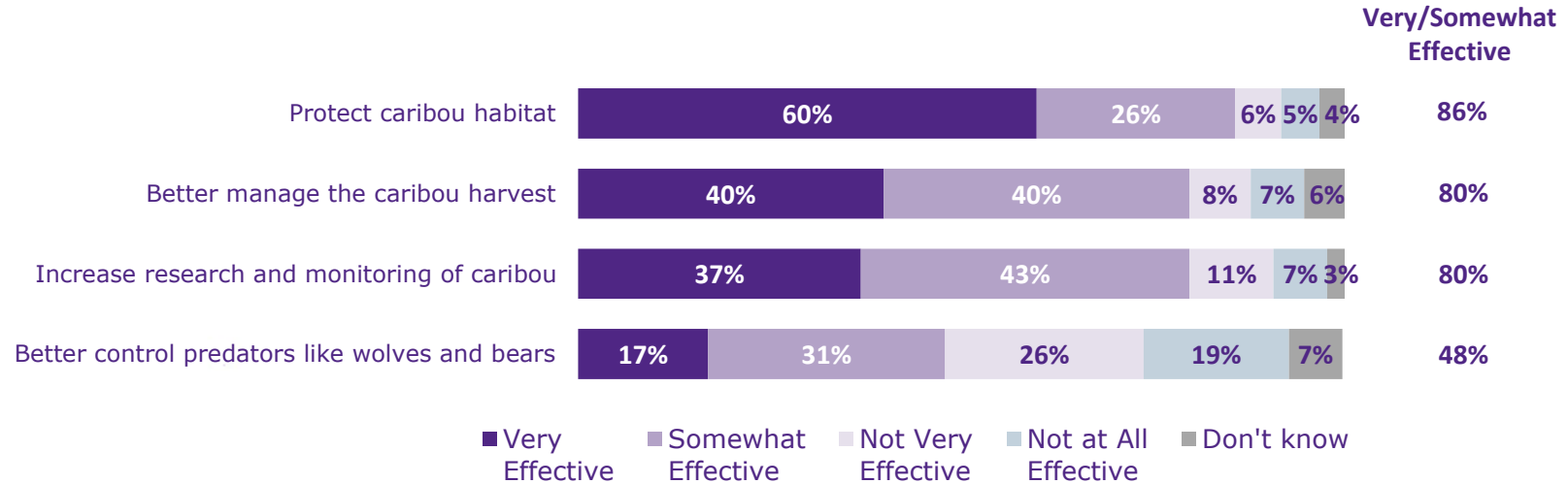


Half (51%) of residents of the territories think their territorial government is not doing enough to protect the barren-ground caribou, as compared to three in ten (30%) who believe it is doing the right amount.

Majorities in all regions except Yukon (45%) say their territorial government is not doing enough on this issue.

Q10. Do you think your territorial government is doing too much, not enough, or about the right amount, to protect barren-ground caribou?

# Effectiveness of approaches to protecting barren-ground caribou (Territories only)



**Residents of the territories are most convinced that an effective way to protect barren-ground caribou is to protect its habitat** (86% effective overall, 60% very effective). Fewer believe better management of the caribou harvest (40% very effective) and increasing research and monitoring (37%) will be as effective.

Residents are least convinced of the value of efforts to control predators (48% overall, 17% very effective). Notably however, Indigenous residents are more likely to believe this approach will be effective (58%) than are non-Indigenous residents (37%).

*Q11 Do you think each of the following steps is likely to be a very, somewhat, not very or not at all effective way for governments to protect barren-ground caribou?*