



**NARRATIVE**  
RESEARCH



Atlantic Quarterly

Commissioned Results  
Summer (Q3) 2024


September 2024


Prepared for:  
Ecology Action Centre







# Methodology


 Mode  
**Telephone survey**


 Audience  
**Adults in Nova Scotia aged 18+**

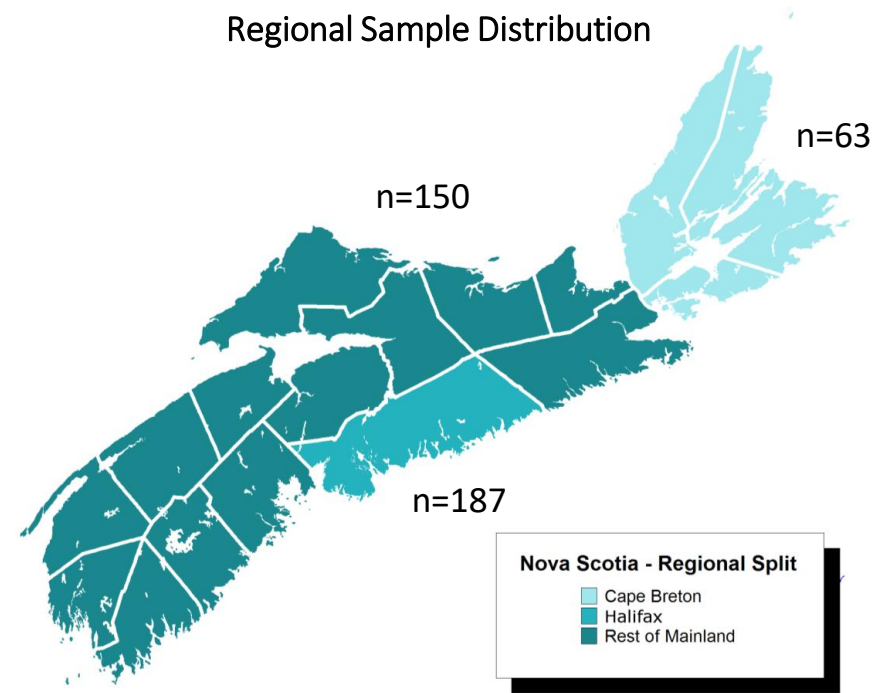
 **400 completes**

 Data Collection Dates  
**August 12-23, 2024**

 **Margin of Error**  
Overall results accurate to within +4.9 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

 **Weighting**  
Results were weighted by age, gender, and region according to Statistics Canada 2021 Census data to be reflective of the population.

 **Notes**  
Table references presented in the report refer to the detailed banner tables. Results may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.





# Highlights

Results from questions commissioned by the Ecology Action Centre on the Atlantic Quarterly Survey indicate that **coastal protection is important to most Nova Scotians** and a **strong majority think the Nova Scotia government should have implemented the Coastal Protection Act instead of optional guidelines**. Indeed, **there is a preference for mandatory rules enforceable by law over optional guidelines**. Moreover, a political candidate's support for the Coastal Protection Act would lead a large minority of residents to be more likely to vote for that candidate.

Support for the implementation of the Coastal Protection Act stems from a **general sense of it being important and need for protection of coastal areas**, along with **preventing further damage** and concern that **climate change and weather is worsening**. Other considerations that come into play for support include the belief that optional guidelines are not enough, and individuals not having the resources to do it themselves. On the other hand, opposition, while more limited, stems from a sense that it is **up to individuals** and **government should not be involved**, along with concerns about costs and other priorities requiring focus. Further contributing to opposition, some view coastal protection as an issue that does not affect everyone, as well as the view that coastal erosion is a natural process that should not be fought.

Of note, opinions do vary by political voting intentions. Those who would vote for the NDP or Liberals if an election were called are more likely than those who would vote for the PCs to view coastal protection as important, as well as being more likely to think that the Coastal Protection Act should have been implemented, to believe rules about coastal protection should be mandatory, and to be more apt to vote for a political candidate that supported the Coastal Protection Act.



# Importance of Coastal Protection

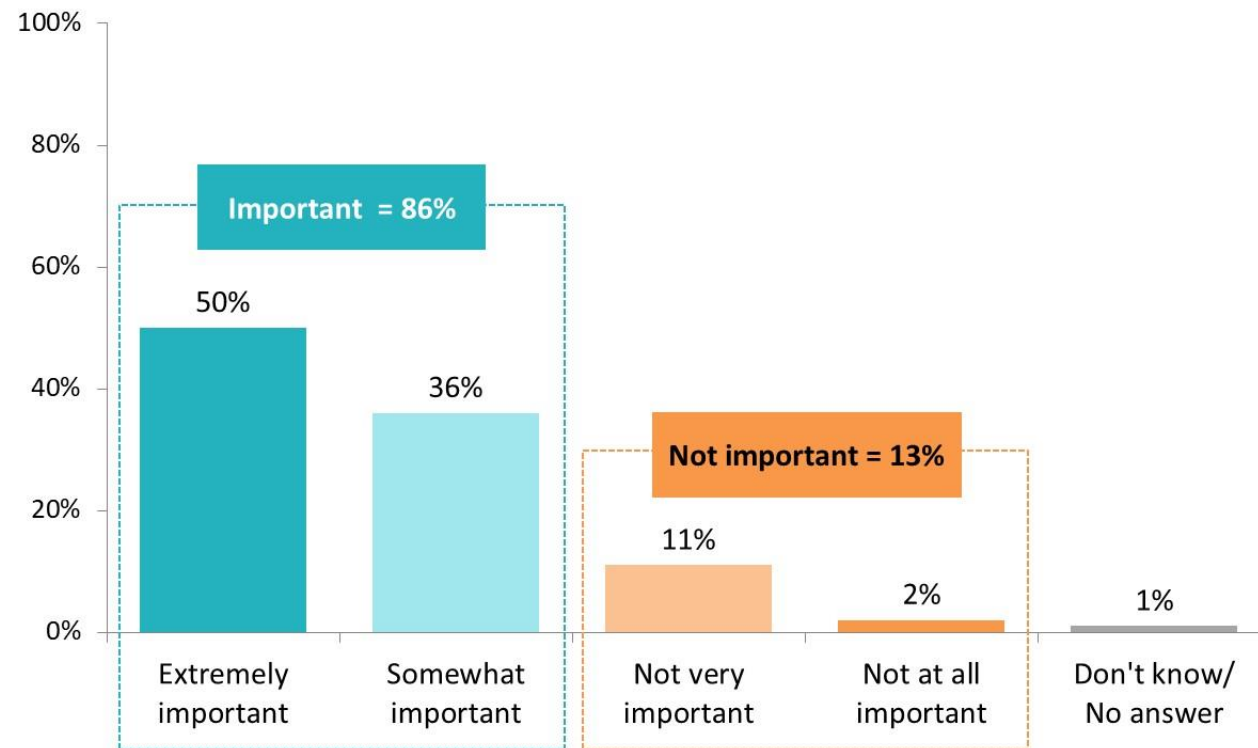
*The issue of coastal protection is important to the vast majority of Nova Scotians.*

Close to nine in ten (86%) Nova Scotians consider the issue of coastal protection as **important**, with one-half (50%) giving the highest possible rating of **extremely important**.

Women are more likely than men to consider it extremely important.

Across political voting intentions, those who would vote for the NDP (69%) in the next election are most likely to consider it extremely important, while those who would vote for the PCs (36%) are least likely (with those who would vote for the Liberals in between at 47%). (Table EAC1)

## Personal Importance of the Issue of Coastal Protection



Q.EAC1: Recently there has been discussion in Nova Scotia about the impacts of climate change in coastal areas, coastal erosion, and how coastal areas should be protected. For you personally, how important is the issue of coastal protection? Is it... (n=400)



# Coastal Protection Information

*A strong majority of Nova Scotians think the government should have implemented the Coastal Protection Act instead of optional guidelines.*

When presented with background information (see text box below) two-thirds (68%) of Nova Scotians state they think the **NS government should have implemented the Coastal Protection Act instead of optional guidelines**. Two in ten (22%) indicate they should not have, while one in ten (10%) are not sure.

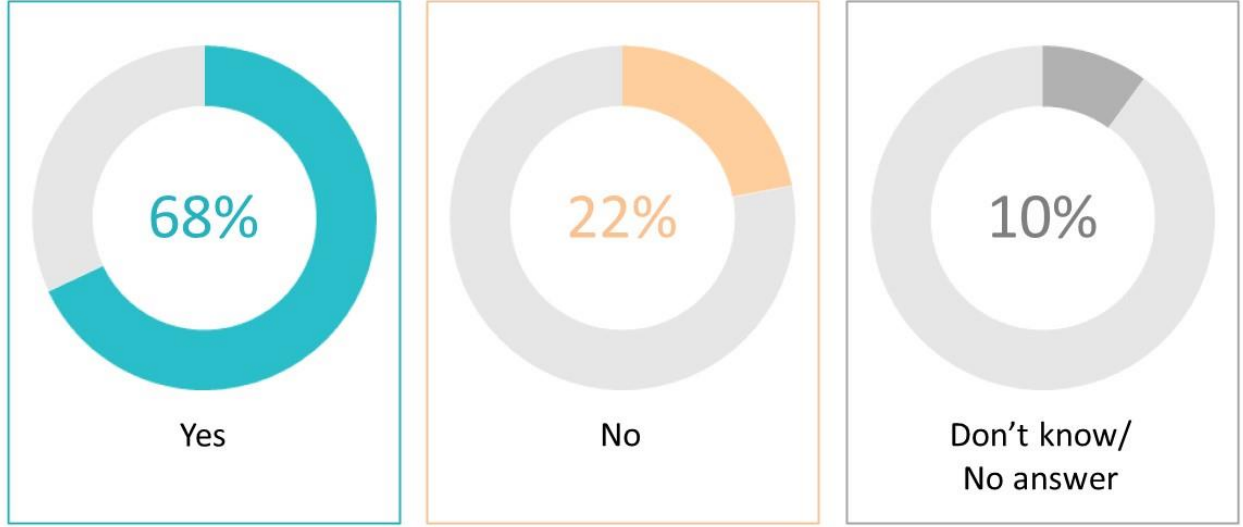
Women are more likely than men to think the Act should have been implemented, along with those with lower household incomes.

The vast majority of those who intend to vote for the Liberals (83%) or NDP (88%) think the Act should have been implemented. Those who intend to vote for the PCs are more divided with just one-half (48%) thinking the Act should have been implemented. (Table EAC2)

*In 2019 the Coastal Protection Act was proposed by the Nova Scotia government at the time and received support from all parties. The legislation aimed to protect habitats and buildings from erosion, rising sea levels, and other effects of climate change.*

*This year, the current Nova Scotia government decided **not** to move forward with this legislation but instead suggested optional guidelines with resources to help property owners and coastal communities plan for the effects of climate change.*

## NS Government Should Have Implemented Coastal Protection Act Instead of Optional Guidelines?



Q.EAC2: All things considered, do you think the government should have implemented the Coastal Protection Act instead of optional guidelines? (n=400)



# Coastal Protection Act

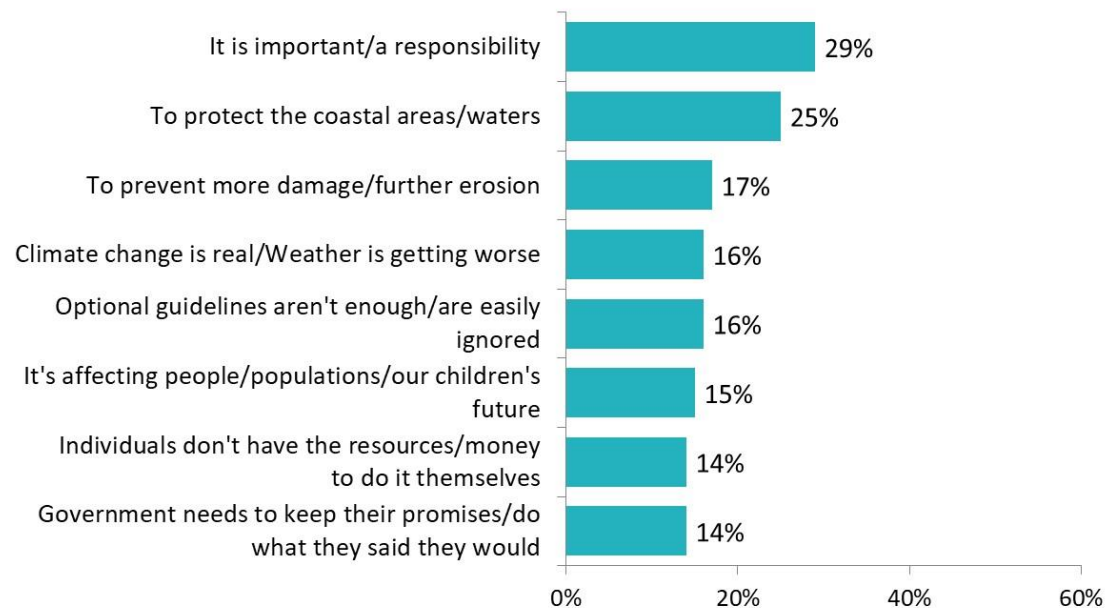
*The perception that the Coastal Protection Act should have been implemented stems from a general sense of importance and need for protection of coastal areas, along with the prevention of more damage or erosion.*

Among those believing the government should have implemented the Coastal Protection Act, a variety of reasons are offered for this belief, with a general sense of it being important or a responsibility (29%) topping the list. There is also a sense of a need to protect coastal areas and waters (25%) and, in a similar vein, to prevent more damage/further erosion (17%). There is also a recognition of climate change and worsening weather (16%).

Some also state that optional guidelines are not enough (16%), along with individuals not having the resources/money to do it themselves (14%). A similar proportion also indicate government needs to do what they said they would (14%). The effect on people and the future (15%) is also a consideration for some. (Table EAC3a)

## Why NS Government Should Have Implemented the Coastal Protection Act

Key Unaided Mentions Among Those Who Said Yes



Q.EAC3a: [IF 'YES' IN Q.EAC2] Why do you think the Nova Scotia government should have implemented the Coastal Protection Act? Probe: anything else? (n=281)



# Coastal Protection Act

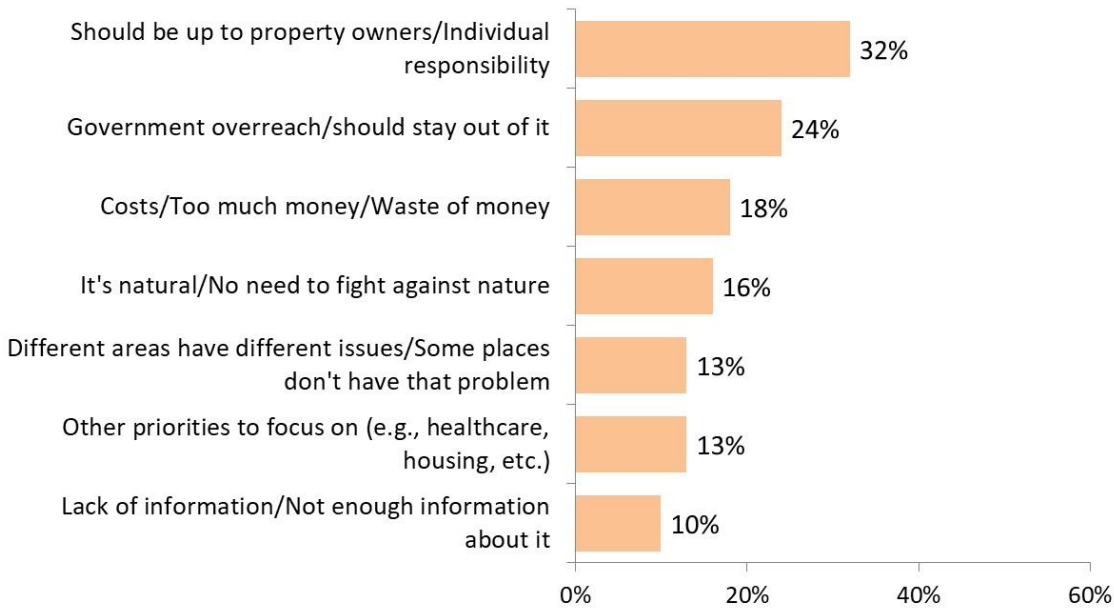
*Disagreement that the government should have implemented the Coastal Protection Act stems from a sense that it is an individual rather than government responsibility, among other reasons.*

Among those who say the government should not have implemented the Coastal Protection Act, one-third (32%) say it **should be up to the property owner**, while one-quarter (24%) say the **government is overreaching or should stay out of it**.

**Costs** are also a consideration for one in five (18%), while some also think there are **other priorities to focus on** (13%). Other reasons offered include a **sense that there is no need to fight against nature** (16%) and it **not being an issue that affects all areas** (13%). (Table EAC3b)

## Why NS Government Should Not Have Implemented the Coastal Protection Act

Key Unaided Mentions Among Those Who Said No



Q.EAC3b: [IF 'NO' IN Q.EAC2] Why do you think the Nova Scotia government should not have implemented the Coastal Protection Act? Probe: anything else? (n=81)



# Coastal Protection Areas

*Over half of Nova Scotians believe that rules about coastal protection should be mandatory and enforceable by law.*

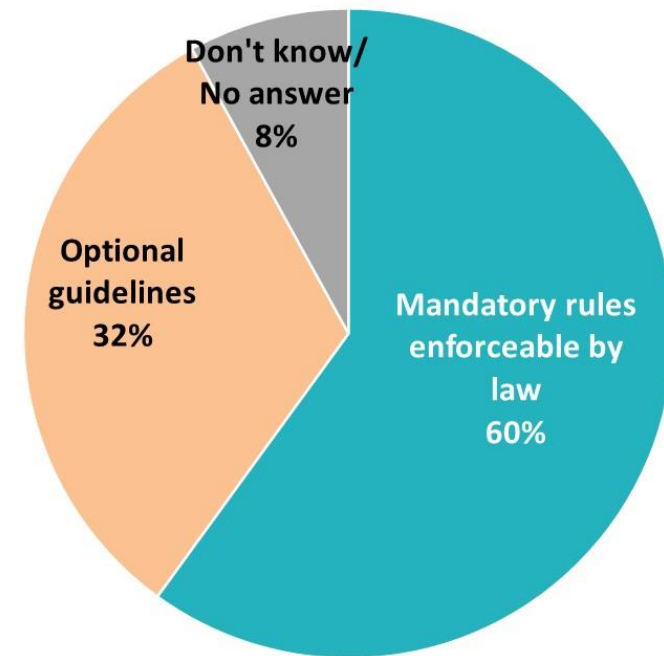
Six in ten (60%) Nova Scotians think that rules about coastal protection should be **mandatory and enforceable by law**, while one-third (32%) think they should be optional guidelines.

Across all demographics, a majority believes they should be mandatory. That said, those in Halifax (67%) are most likely and those in the rest of mainland Nova Scotia (52%) are least likely to believe rules about coastal protection should be mandatory (with Cape Breton residents in between at 57%).

When examining voting intentions, those who intend to vote for the Liberals (83%) or NDP (85%) in the next provincial election largely think the rules should be mandatory. By contrast, among those who intend to vote for the PCs, a slight majority (54%) think they should be optional.

There is also a difference in terms of likelihood of voting in the next provincial election. Close to two-thirds (64%) of those who say they will definitely vote think the rules should be mandatory compared with slightly fewer of those who would probably vote (50%), and even fewer of those who will probably not or definitely not vote (45%). (Table EAC4)

## Should Rules About Coastal Protection Be Mandatory and Enforceable by Law or Should Be Optional Guidelines?



Q.EAC4: And all things considered, do you think rules about coastal protection should be mandatory and enforceable by law, or do you think that rules about coastal protection should be optional guidelines? (n=400)





# Impact on Voting Intentions

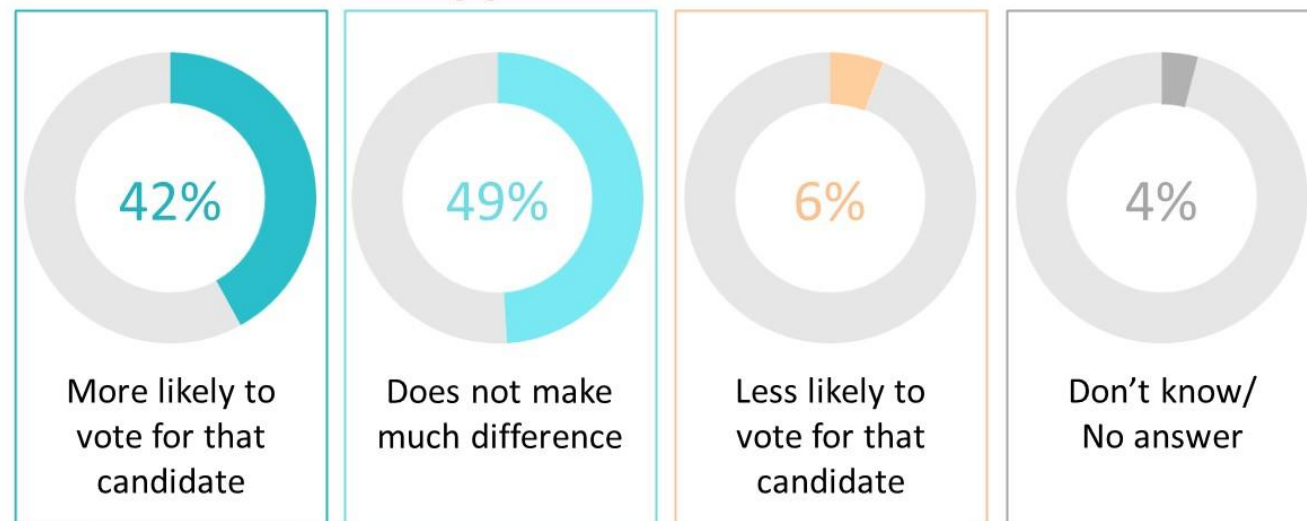
*A political candidate's support for the Coastal Protection Act would lead a large minority to be more likely to vote for that candidate.*

Four in ten (42%) Nova Scotians would be **more likely to vote** for a political candidate in a provincial election if they supported the Coastal Protection Act. Just 6% say they would be **less likely**, while one-half (49%) indicates it **does not make much difference**.

Women are more likely than men to indicate their likelihood of voting for a political candidate is increased if they supported the Coastal Protection Act. Conversely, men and younger residents are more likely to say it does not make a difference.

A majority of those who would vote for the Liberals (61%) or NDP (64%) are more likely to support a candidate that supported the Coastal Protection Act. Conversely, a majority of those who intend to vote for the PCs (58%) says it would not make much difference. (Table EAC5)

## Likelihood of Voting for Candidate in a Provincial Election Who Supported the Coastal Protection Act



Q.EAC5: If a political candidate in a provincial election supported the Coastal Protection Act, would you be more likely to vote for that individual, less likely to vote for that individual, or does it not make much difference? (n=400)

every insight tells a story.

