

# *Climate Action Plan*

## ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY



## Executive Summary

The Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK) is working on a long-term Climate Action Plan (CAP) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance the community's resilience to climate change. The plan considers the impact of increasing annual average temperature, precipitation, and the frequency of wildfires, heat waves, and flooding.

The CAP's development involved a process that integrated research, public outreach, and workshops with RDEK staff, stakeholders, and community representatives to ensure a comprehensive and meaningful engagement.

The staff and stakeholder workshops aimed to identify regional climate-related challenges, strengths and gaps in current resilience strategies. The focus was on analyzing primary climate hazards, such as wildfires, extreme weather, and drought, and brainstorming actionable strategies for emission reduction and sustainability. The Climate Action Plan Working Group (CAPWG) was crucial in guiding the CAP's development, reviewing workshop outcomes, and ensuring alignment with regional and broader environmental goals.

An online survey collected feedback from the public, which received over a thousand responses. The survey revealed that the public is concerned about hazards like wildfires, smoke, drought, and biodiversity loss. Many respondents expressed extreme concern and showed support for increasing levels of action. The survey also revealed that while most residents are concerned about climate change and are taking action to mitigate its impacts, some individuals responded that they are not at all concerned. These residents are hesitant about the government allocating resources towards climate resilience initiatives, especially if it leads to increased taxation.

Overall, residents have taken proactive steps towards sustainability, such as adopting electric and hybrid vehicles, improving home energy efficiency, and focusing on local consumption to reduce emissions. The financial cost emerged as a primary barrier to taking climate action. Survey participants identified the need for consistent climate leadership from the government and the development of programs and incentives to foster resilience. The survey also highlighted key areas where the respondents think the RDEK can effectively prepare for climate change impacts. These include restoring and expanding natural areas, developing programs and incentives for residents and businesses to enhance climate resilience, incorporating climate change impacts into future land use and development decisions, and investing in Regional District assets to mitigate climate-related impacts.

All the input obtained from engagement will guide the next phase of CAP development, ensuring that it reflects the community's needs.

# Table of Contents

- Executive Summary..... ii
- Table of Contents..... iii
- 1. Background .....1
- 2. Staff and Stakeholder Engagement .....1
- 3. Public Online Survey.....3
  - 3.1 Demographics of Participation.....3
  - 3.2 Impacts of Climate Change .....5
  - 3.3 Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions .....9
  - 3.4 Targets.....14
  - 3.5 Impacts of Climate Change in the Community.....17
  - 3.6 Climate Change Action in the Community.....19
- 4. Next Steps.....20

# 1. Background

The RDEK is developing a long-term Climate Action Plan for the RDEK corporate operations and electoral areas. This plan will articulate a proactive and appropriate response to minimize emissions contributing to global climate change and to adapt to projected climate change impacts. The plan will set a vision and targets for 2050 and interim climate and energy action dates.

This Climate Action Plan was created after conducting detailed research, analysis, public outreach, and workshops involving Regional District staff, representatives from stakeholder organizations and community members (refer to Figure 2 for an overview of the process). The RDEK was fortunate to have the participation of many community representatives who provided valuable feedback during the process. Based on these interactions, RDEK developed a set of objectives and actions to steer regional climate efforts for the years ahead.

This report outlines the process and outcomes of engagement.

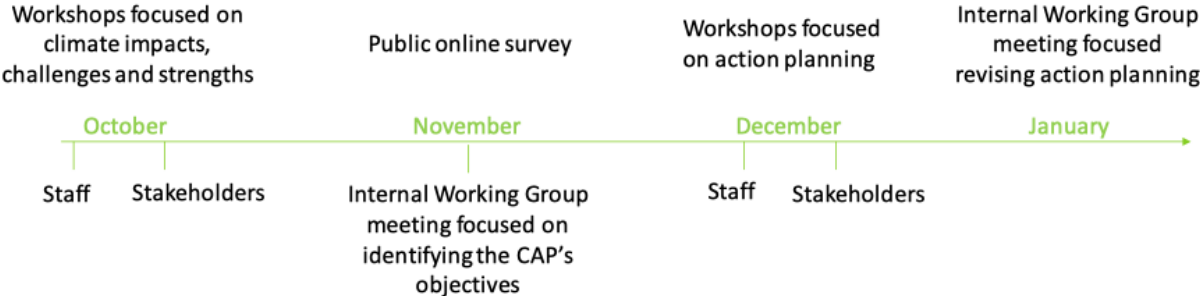


Figure 1. Summary of the engagement process.

# 2. Staff and Stakeholder Engagement

The RDEK's Climate Action Plan was developed with the help of staff and stakeholders. To ensure meaningful involvement and participation, we conducted two separate workshops for staff and two others for stakeholders. We also held three specialized meetings with RDEK's Climate Action Plan Working Group (CAPWG) to refine the ideas gathered from the workshops further.

## Climate Action Plan Working Group

The RDEK CAP had a Climate Action Plan Working Group (CAPWG) of key personnel from various departments. The CAPWG was involved throughout the planning process, reviewing and providing feedback on climate action development. The group also held three sessions to discuss the outcomes of staff and stakeholder workshops and guide the plan's development.

At the first meeting, the CAPWG conducted a detailed review of climate initiatives that already exist in the region. This helped to identify areas that require more attention and ongoing efforts. Additionally, the group carried out a comprehensive stakeholder mapping exercise to identify key individuals and organizations that should be involved in the planning process. This inclusive approach ensures that all relevant parties' perspectives are considered.

In the second meeting, the CAPWG discussed the region's top climate-related hazards and concerns identified in the first round of workshops. This session was important in defining the specific objectives of the Climate Action Plan. The group analyzed the insights gained from the workshops, ensuring the plan's objectives were relevant to the regional context and aligned with broader environmental goals.

In the third meeting, the CAPWG focused on the potential actions proposed during the second round of workshops. This session involved a careful evaluation and prioritization of the proposed actions. The group worked collaboratively to refine these actions, ensuring they were impactful, feasible, and aligned with the previously established objectives.

### **Workshops Round 1: Identifying Regional Challenges and Strengths**

The first round of workshops focused on understanding the regional impacts of climate-related hazards and vulnerabilities and the existing strengths and gaps in community and corporate resilience strategies. These workshops set the groundwork for the CAP by focusing on the following areas:

- **Hazards Analysis:** Participants analyzed five primary climate-related hazards: wildfires and smoke, extreme weather events, floods and debris flows, drought, and extreme heat. The discussion centred around the unique impacts of these hazards on RDEK's operations, the region's physical, social, and environmental vulnerabilities, and the strengths and gaps in existing resilience strategies.
- **Energy and Emissions Analysis:** Participants also delved into the challenges and opportunities related to energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. Key discussion points included the challenges in reducing emissions, current mitigation strategies, and the identification of gaps in existing approaches.

## **Workshops Round 2: Brainstorming Actionable Strategies**

The second round of workshops, guided by objectives and themes identified by the Internal Working Group, focused on brainstorming actionable strategies. This round of brainstorming across staff and stakeholder workshops yielded a variety of actions.

The staff workshop focused on reducing emissions from buildings and infrastructure, promoting electric vehicles and sustainable transportation options, helping businesses adapt to climate change, reducing waste, improving water systems, ensuring food security, and increasing the resilience of natural systems.

In the stakeholder workshop, the focus was on encouraging the RDEK to take a leadership role in climate action, promoting zero-carbon and low-emission options, improving transportation, collaborating with local organizations to restore ecosystems, creating a formal group to promote climate action, reducing waste and promoting water conservation in businesses, and ensuring business continuity after climate events.

## **3. Public Online Survey**

From October 25<sup>th</sup> to December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, the RDEK hosted an online public survey through the RDEK “Engage East Kootenay” portal. The survey's objectives were to collect community views and priorities concerning climate change. A total of 1086 people answered the survey.

### **3.1 Demographics of Participation**

The online survey received responses from a diverse group from the RDEK community. The following data illustrate the electoral areas in which the survey participants reside or have an interest, their specific interests in the RDEK electoral areas, the type of business owned by

## Regional District of East Kootenay, Climate Action Plan Engagement Summary

business owners, and their age range.

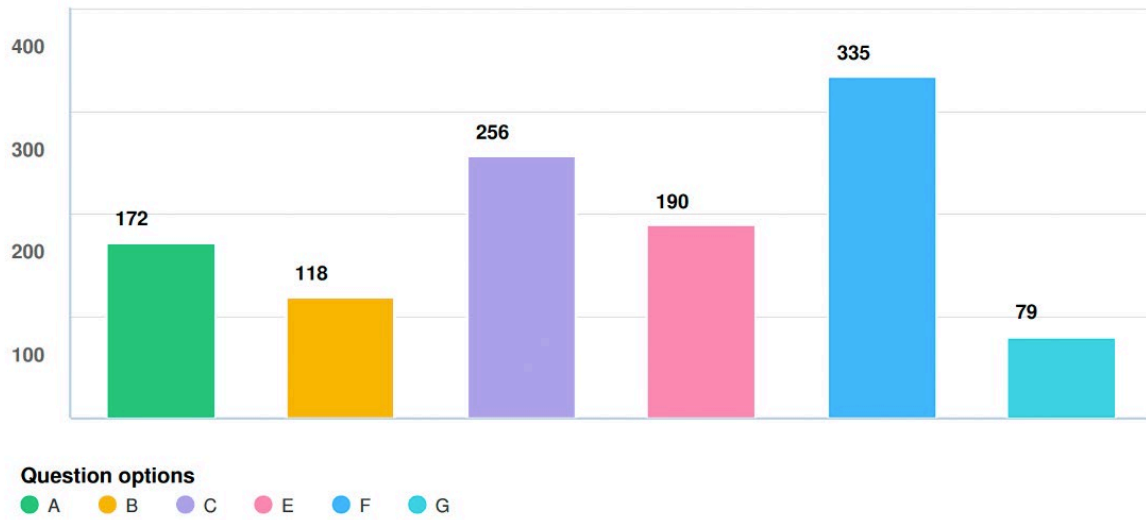


Figure 2. Public survey: Electoral areas respondents live or have an interest in.

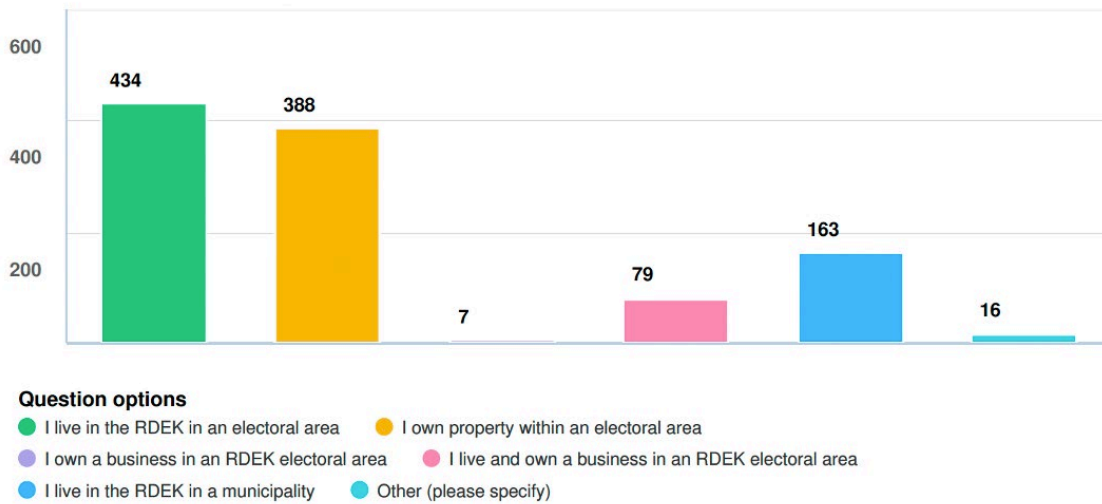


Figure 3. Public survey: Breakdown of respondents' interest in the survey.

## Regional District of East Kootenay, Climate Action Plan Engagement Summary

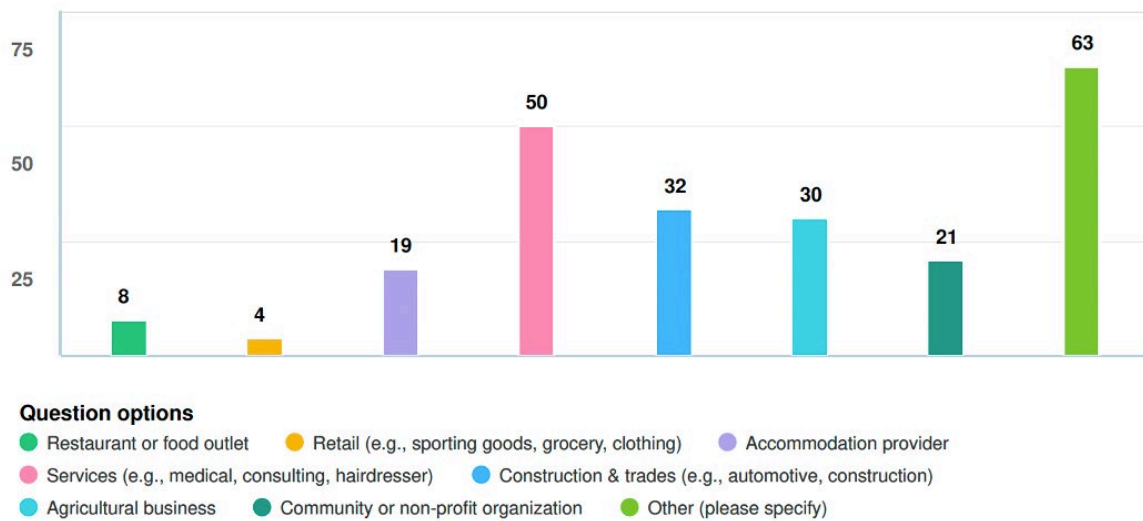


Figure 4. Public survey: Types of businesses owned by respondents who are business owners. Respondents were allowed to choose multiple answers.

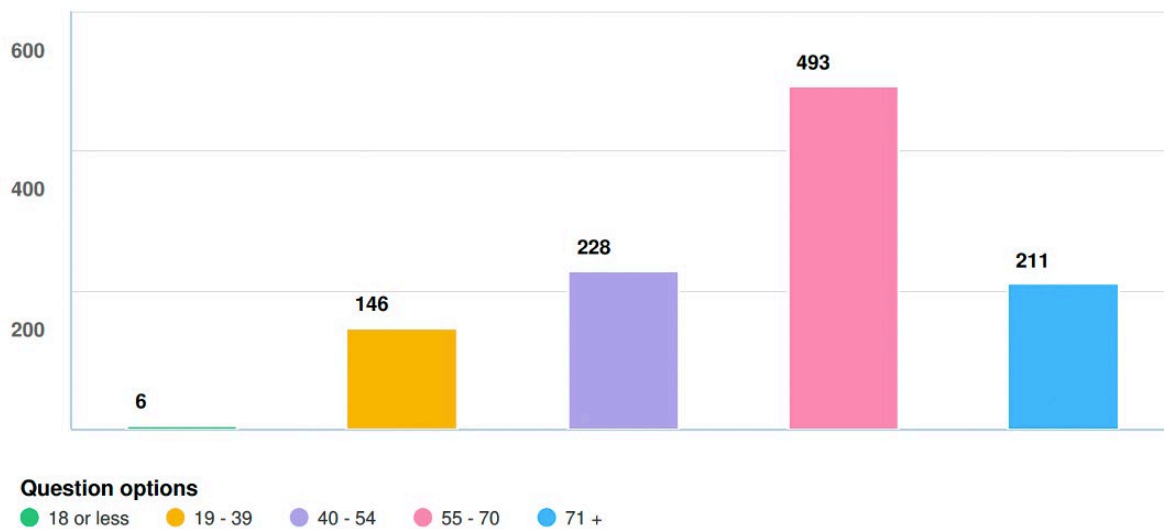


Figure 5. Public survey: The age range of survey respondents.

### 3.2 Impacts of Climate Change

#### How concerned are you about the impacts of climate change in the RDEK?

About 37% of respondents were extremely concerned about the impacts of climate change in the RDEK, while approximately 24% were not at all concerned. The rest of the respondents are



somewhat or moderately concerned.

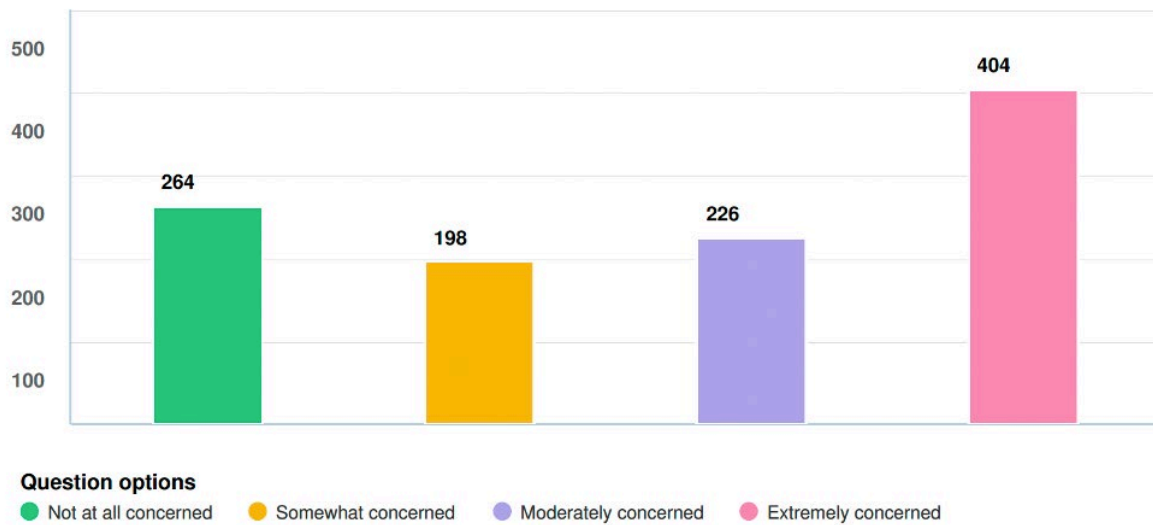


Figure 6. Public survey: Breakdown of respondents' concerns about the impacts of climate change in the RDEK.

### How concerned are you about the impacts of specific climate-related hazards and the gradual onset of climate risks over the next decade?

Overall, the most concerning hazards are wildfires and smoke, with over 53% of respondents being extremely concerned. This is followed by drought (42%) and reductions in precipitation as snow and related effects (43%). The least concerning hazard, but still significant, is flood and debris flow, with nearly 16% of respondents being extremely concerned. The results indicate a high level of concern among respondents regarding the various impacts of climate-related hazards.

The results were also broken out by response based on electoral Area. Every Electoral Area had wildfires and smoke identified as their top climate-related hazard of concern over the next 10 years. The top 2 and 3 answers were mixed, but mainly included drought and reduction in precipitation as snow and related changes to water flow. The only two electoral areas that had a different response were Electoral Areas A and G who weren't as concerned about drought and had more concern about biodiversity loss.

## Regional District of East Kootenay, Climate Action Plan Engagement Summary

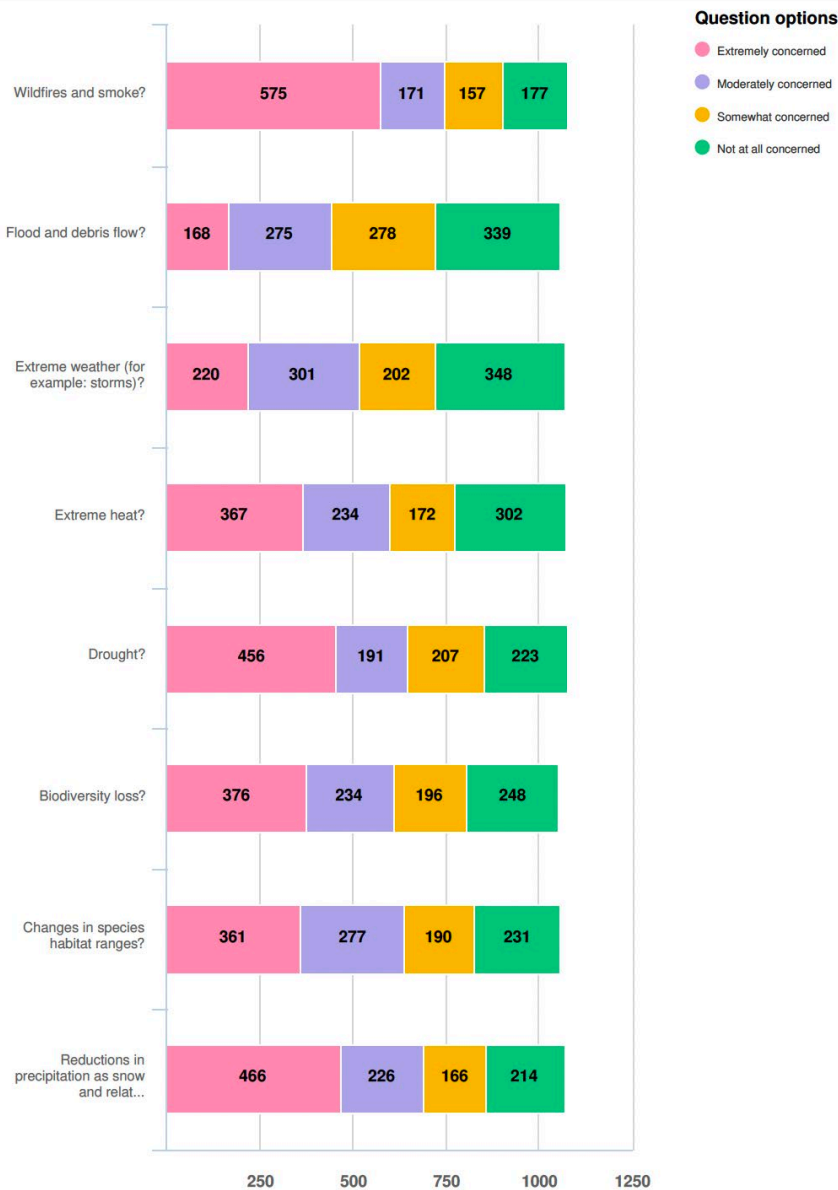


Figure 7. Public survey: Respondents' concerns about climate change risks over the next decade.

### Which areas of climate change impact concern you the most?

The top concerns of survey participants were related to the natural environment (673 responses), health and wellbeing (510), homes and infrastructure (454), and the rising cost of living (366). The figure below provides a total breakdown of these responses.

## Regional District of East Kootenay, Climate Action Plan Engagement Summary

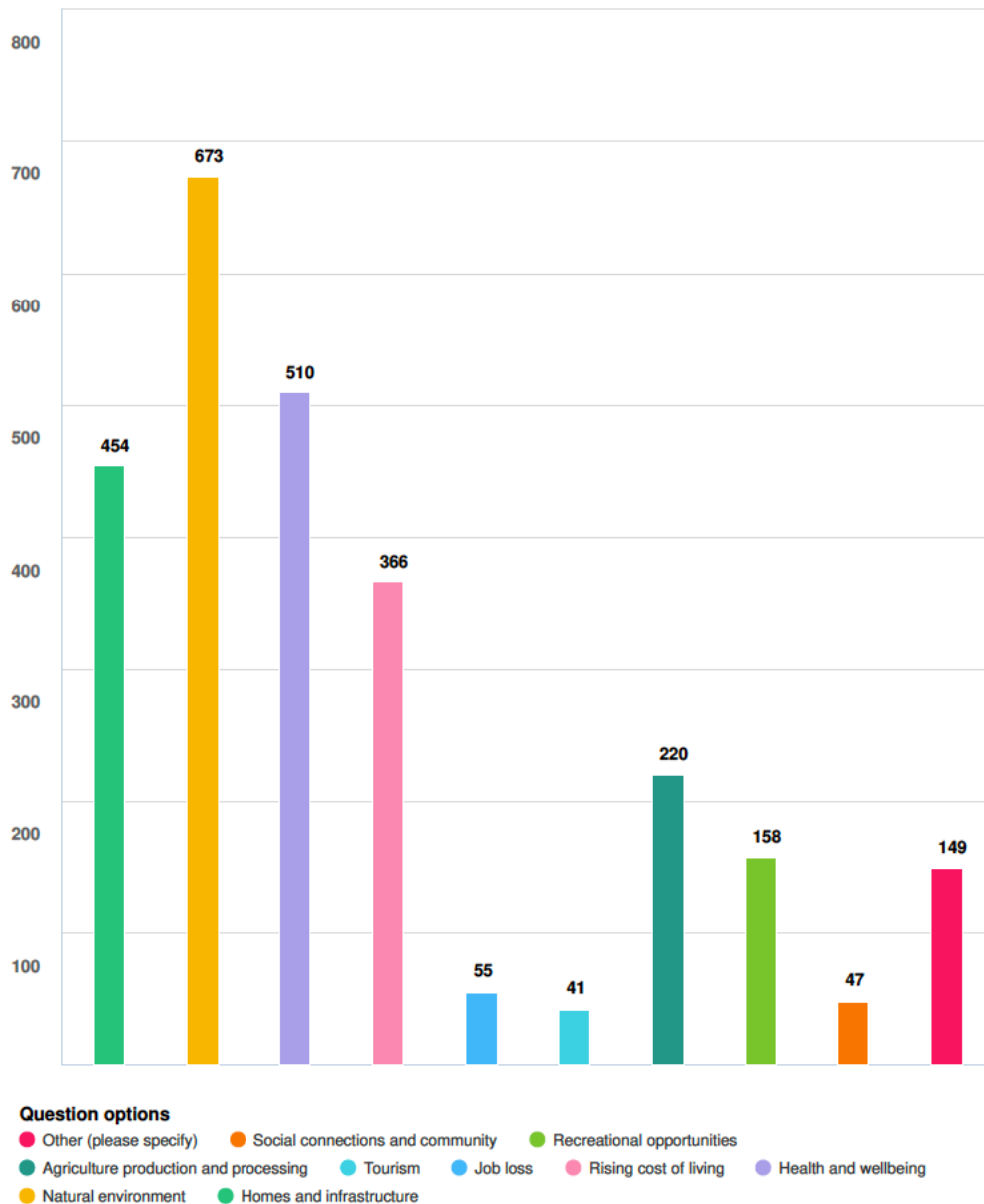


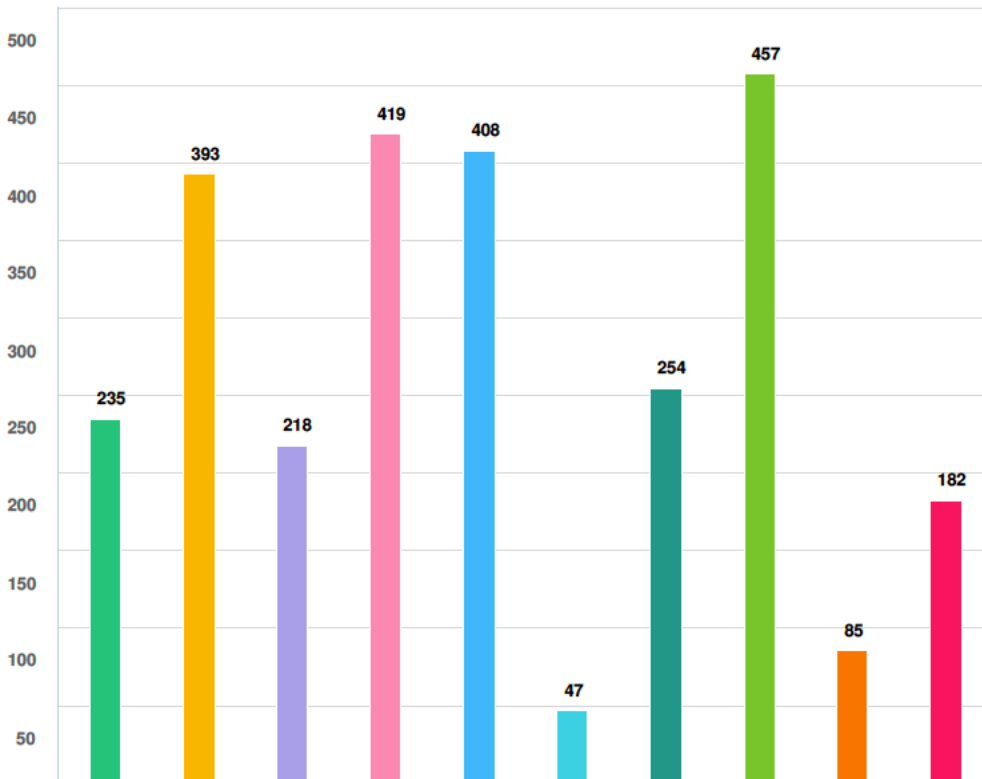
Figure 8: Public survey: Areas of climate change impact of most concern for respondents.

**The list below provides some areas where the Regional District can help prepare for the impacts of climate change. Which ones do you think are most important?**

The most important ways the RDEK can help prepare for the impacts of climate change identified include restoring and expanding natural areas (457), developing programs and incentives to help residents and businesses become more resilient to climate change impacts

## Regional District of East Kootenay, Climate Action Plan Engagement Summary

(419), including climate change impacts in future decisions about land use and development (408), and investing in Regional District assets to reduce climate-related impacts (393).



### Question options

- Other (Please indicate)
- Supporting local business continuity during and following climate-related hazards to support a quick recovery
- Restoring or expanding natural areas to provide a buffer to climate change impacts and restoring natural areas after a climate-related event
- Further developing and activating emergency management response plans, providing emergency social services, coordinating with first responders, etc.
- Aiding the development and expansion of social networks to increase community resilience
- Including climate change impacts in future decisions about land use and development (for example, changing land use in floodplains)
- Developing and delivering programs and incentives to help residents and businesses become more resilient to climate change impacts (E.g continuing the FireSmart program, a program for making homes and buildings more resilient to flooding or drought)
- Investing in climate-related hazard structural mitigation such as debris flow barriers, flood erosion protection structures, etc.
- Assessing and investing in Regional District assets to reduce climate-related impacts (for example, wastewater treatment systems, landfill, water distribution to several communities, regional parks, and recreation centres)
- Preparing for climate-related hazards by monitoring climate hazards and engaging residents and businesses on how they can prepare

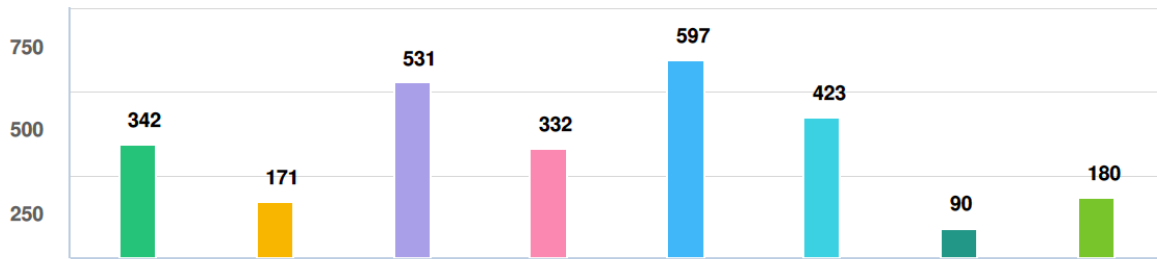
Figure 9: Public survey: Areas that respondents think the Regional District can better help prepare for the impacts of climate change.

### 3.3 Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions

**There are many ways for individuals and businesses to reduce emissions. Of those listed next, which would you be most likely to do?**

## Regional District of East Kootenay, Climate Action Plan Engagement Summary

To reduce emissions, survey participants were most likely to reduce waste, compost, and recycle more (597), followed by complete home energy efficiency retrofits (531) and support local natural area restoration efforts (423).



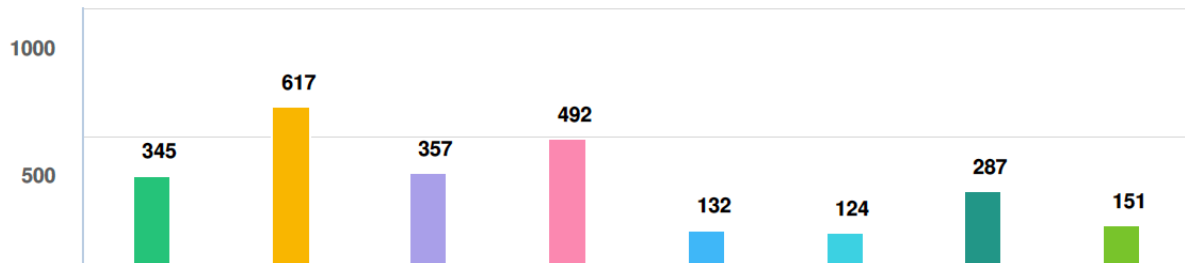
### Question options

- Other (please specify)
- Advocate to Provincial and Federal government (e.g., write letters, attend meetings with elected representatives)
- Support local natural area restoration efforts
- Reduce waste, and compost and recycle more
- Use clean energy (e.g., solar, purchase renewable natural gas)
- Complete home energy efficiency retrofits (e.g., improve insulation, add weather stripping, install a heat pump)
- Use an electric vehicle
- Walk or bike more often

Figure 10: Public survey: Ways individuals and businesses think they are more likely to do to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

**There are lots of ways that individuals and businesses can reduce emissions. Which of those listed next is currently the most difficult for you to do?**

The most challenging way to reduce emissions identified was using an electric vehicle (617), followed by using clean energy (492), completing home energy retrofits (357) and walking or biking more often (345).



**Question options**

- Other (please specify)
- Advocate to Provincial and Federal government (e.g., write letters, attend meetings with elected representatives)
- Support local natural area restoration efforts ● Reduce waste, and compost and recycle more
- Use clean energy (e.g., solar, purchase renewable natural gas)
- Complete home energy efficiency retrofits (e.g., improve insulation, add weather stripping, install a heat pump)
- Use an electric vehicle ● Walk or bike more often

*Figure 11: Public survey: Ways individuals and businesses think most difficult to do to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.*

### What are the top barriers you are facing to taking action to reduce emissions or prepare for climate change?

The top barrier to taking action on climate change identified by far was the financial cost (636), followed by worry about the efficacy of certain emission-reducing technologies (e.g., heat pump efficacy in cold weather, long-range EVs) (447), and the need for government decisions to reflect consistent climate leadership (310).

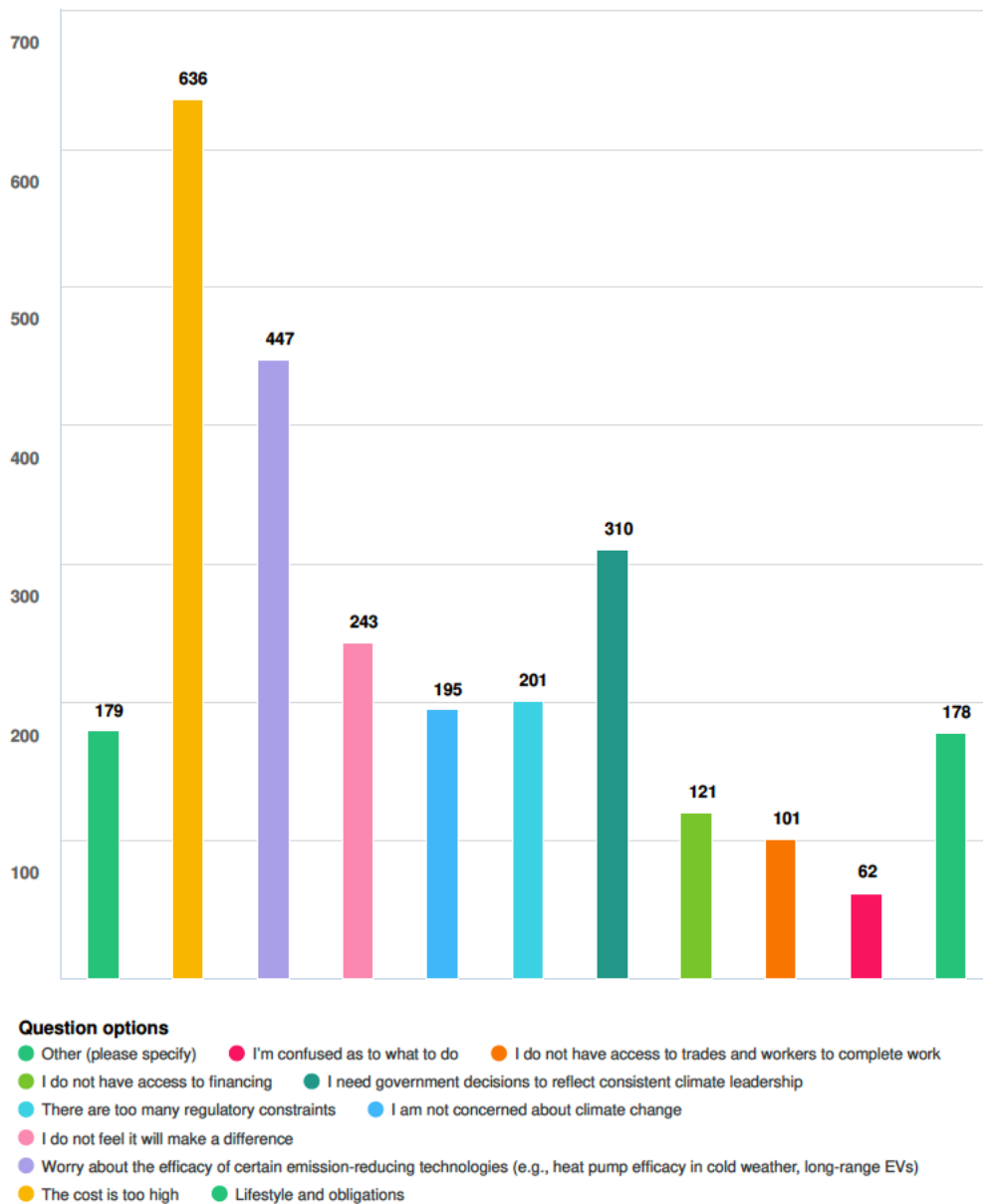


Figure 12: Public survey: Top barriers respondents are facing to taking action to reduce emissions or prepare for climate change.

### Which areas out of those provided would you like to see the Regional District prioritize over the next 5 to 8 years?

Survey respondents would like the Regional District to restore and enhance green spaces to increase natural carbon storage (479), followed by developing and delivering programs to help residents and businesses reduce emissions from buildings (466) and continuing to support zero waste and composting initiatives (370).

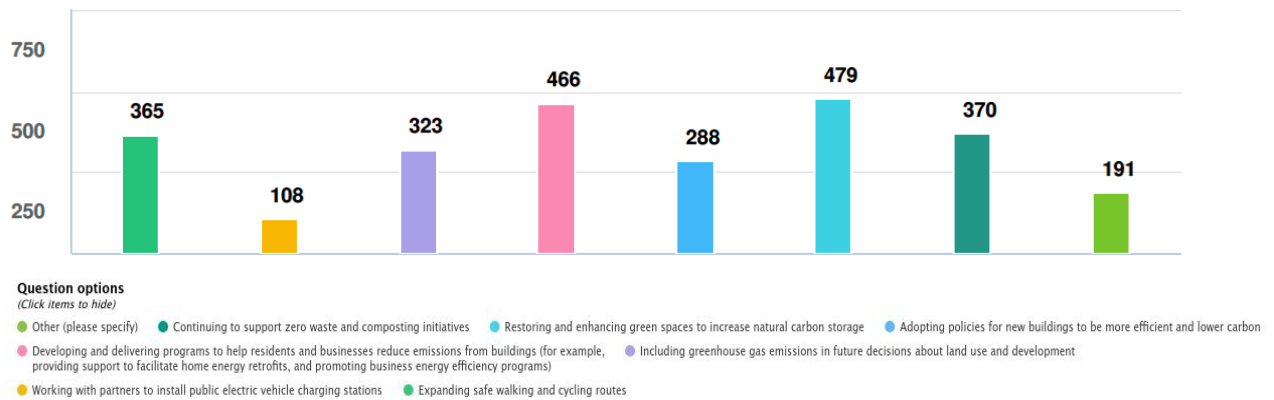


Figure 13: Public survey: Areas respondents would you like to see the Regional District prioritize over the next 5 to 8 years.



### 3.4 Targets

#### How important is it for the Regional District to act to reduce emissions and to prepare for the impacts of climate change in the Electoral Areas?

The majority of survey respondents (41%) felt it was very important for the RDEK to reduce emissions and prepare for the impacts of climate change in the Electoral Areas.

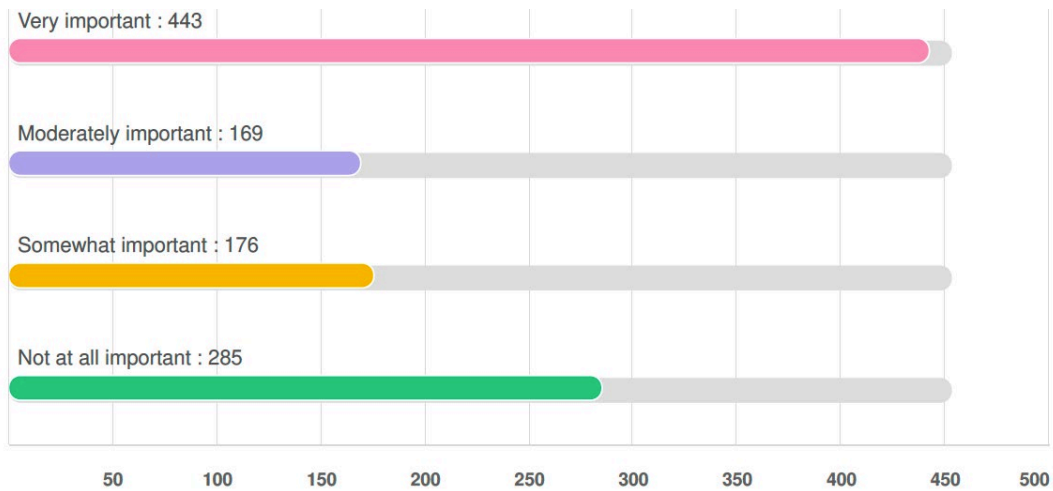
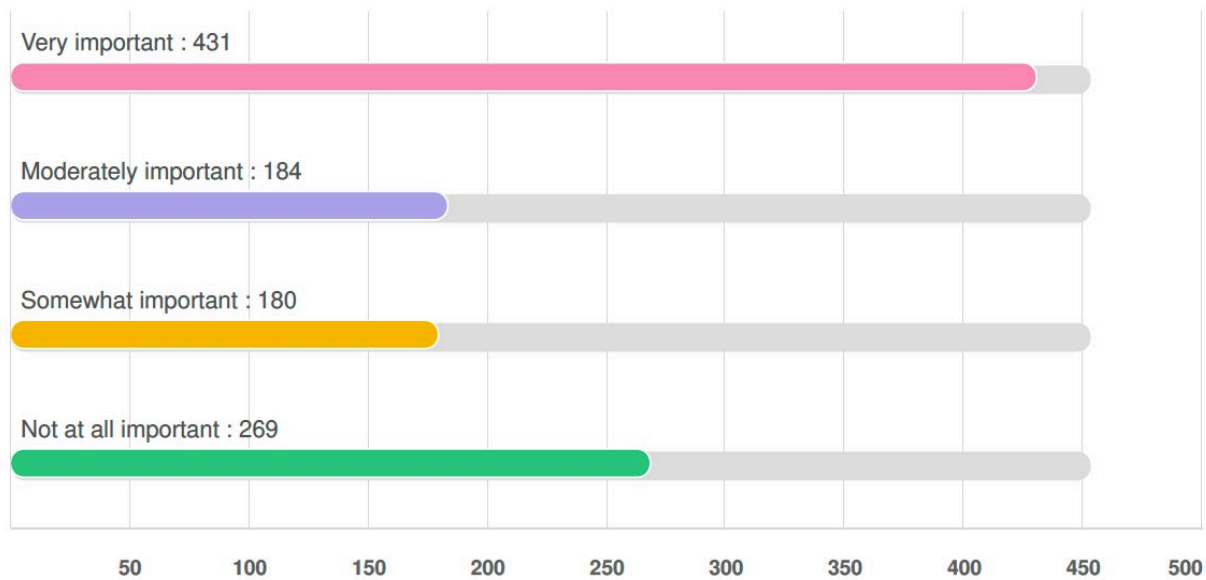


Figure 14: Public survey: Respondents' opinion on how important it is for the Regional District to act to reduce emissions and to prepare for the impacts of climate change in the Electoral Areas.

**How important is it for the Regional District to act to reduce emissions and to prepare for the impacts of climate change in RDEK corporate operations?**

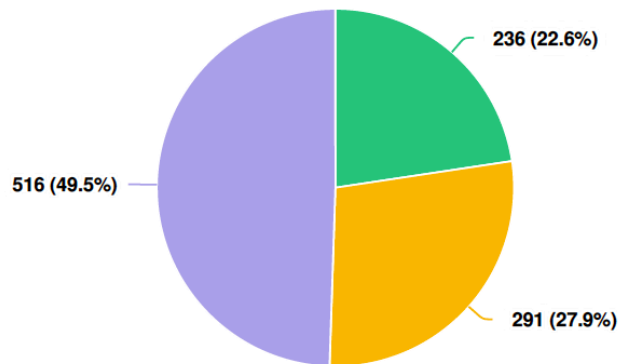
Most survey respondents (40%) felt it was very important for the RDEK to reduce emissions and prepare for the impacts of climate change in operations.



*Figure 15: Public survey: Respondents' opinion on how important it is for the Regional District to act to reduce emissions and to prepare for the impacts of climate change in its corporate operations.*

**The province has set targets to reduce all greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2030 from 2007 levels and reach net zero emissions in 2050. What do you think about these targets?**

Half of the survey respondents felt the provincial greenhouse gas emission targets were too ambitious, while the other half was split between feeling these targets were about right or don't go far enough.



**Question options**

- These targets are too ambitious (e.g. RDEK doesn't need to reduce emissions as much/as fast as the provincial targets)
- These targets are about right
- These targets don't go far enough (e.g. RDEK should be reducing emissions faster)

*Figure 16: Public survey: Respondents' thoughts about the provincial targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.*

### 3.5 Impacts of Climate Change in the Community

#### How is climate change impacting your life? Your business?

Survey participants provided 773 responses to how climate change impacts their lives and businesses. Responses were entered into a word cloud generator to identify keywords, and the results are displayed in the word cloud below.

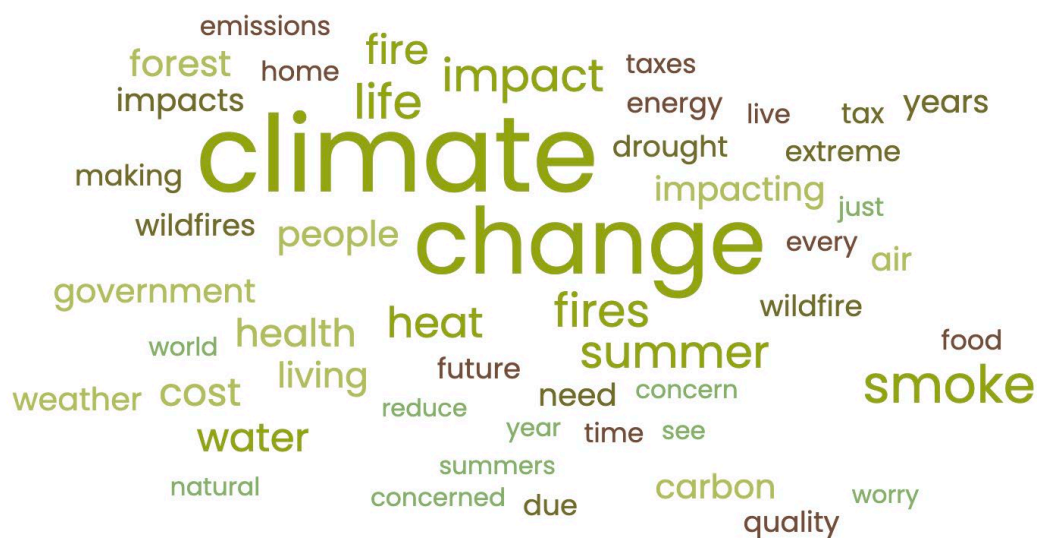


Figure 17: Public survey: Keywords identified in the question: how does climate change impact your life? Your business?

The survey revealed that people are worried about various climate change issues, including:

- **Wildfires and Smoke:** There is a growing concern among many people regarding the rising frequency and severity of wildfires. The smoke emanating from these wildfires is a significant cause for worry, as it has a negative impact on air quality and personal health. For instance, one respondent pointed out that places like Panorama Mountain Village depend heavily on tourism and outdoor sports. Therefore, if the frequency of wildfires continues to increase or there is less snow in the winter, it will cause a direct loss of income for the local community.
- **Water Security:** The availability and quality of drinking water are major concerns for people. A respondent mentioned the threat of water sources becoming undrinkable due to warming and contamination from parasites and viruses. Another respondent was worried about lower water levels in reservoirs, lakes, and rivers, leading to personal water restrictions.

## Regional District of East Kootenay, **Climate Action Plan Engagement Summary**

- **Food Insecurity:** The survey results showed anxiety over the potential for heat and drought conditions, worsened by climate change, to cause food scarcity. Flooding and other extreme weather events are also feared to impede access to supplies.
- **Biodiversity Loss:** Numerous responses focused on the loss of biodiversity and the impact of climate change on different species. Respondents expressed worry about the limited capacity of some species to adapt to changes in climate, as well as the increasing frequency of extreme weather events. Additionally, there was concern about the spread of invasive species, which can cause harm to native flora and fauna.
- **Human Health and Wellness:** Respondents are worried about the broader health implications of climate change. The concerns range from respiratory issues due to poor air quality to mental health impacts caused by witnessing landscape changes and natural destruction.
- **Economic Impacts:** Economic concerns are closely tied to climate change hazards, with worries about the impacts on local industries, including tourism and agriculture. One respondent expressed concern about the long-term viability of winter sports in the region due to reduced snowfall.
- **Extreme Weather Events:** There is a general concern over more extreme and less predictable weather patterns. Heat waves, severe storms, and the resultant damage and economic losses are also significant worries.

The survey also showed that while most residents are concerned about climate change and taking action to mitigate its impacts, there are also individuals who are not at all concerned. These residents are hesitant about the government allocating resources towards climate resilience initiatives, especially if it leads to increased taxation.



- **Local Consumption and Production:** Respondents are focusing on consuming locally produced goods, including food, to reduce transportation emissions, with some taking up gardening and composting to become more self-sufficient.
- **Recycling and Waste Reduction:** Recycling, composting, and minimizing household waste are common themes, with some specifically mentioning responsible shopping and reducing unnecessary journeys.
- **Water Conservation:** In response to potential water scarcity, some individuals are conserving water and preparing for drought conditions.
- **Sustainable Lifestyle Choices:** A few respondents mentioned lifestyle choices, such as eating less meat and promoting habitat conservation, as part of their contribution to mitigating the impacts of climate change.
- **Infrastructure and Community Planning:** There is a call for better infrastructure planning to encourage cycling over driving, such as safer biking options and more visible bike racks.

## **4. Next Steps**

The RDEK's Climate Action Plan process received a diverse range of valuable feedback from the community. The RDEK would like to thank everyone who participated in the workshops or responded to the survey. The actions and responses shared by the community have been considered while moving forward to the next phases of the Climate Action Plan development. This is to ensure that the plan aligns with the needs of our community.