

Canadians Cast Their Nets of Preference: New Study Reveals Insights into Seafood Choices and Sustainability

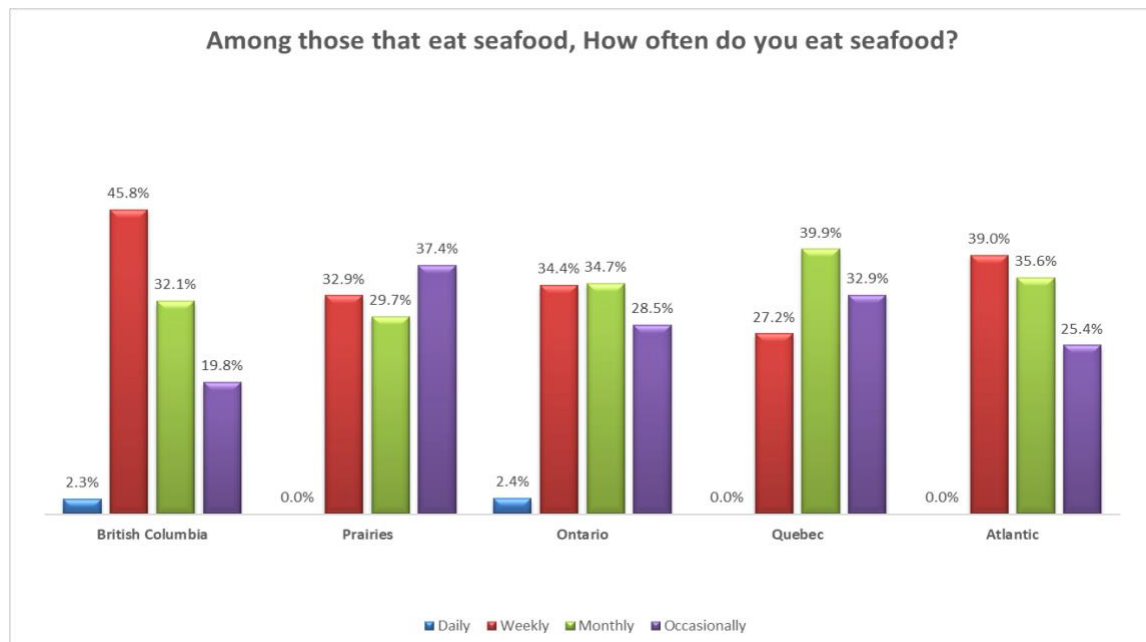
HALIFAX, October 24, 2023 – As Canadians celebrate National Seafood Month in October, the Agri-Food Analytics Lab at Dalhousie University is proud to unveil a groundbreaking study on the Blue Economy. Led by renowned researchers **Dr. Stefanie Colombo** and **Dr. Sylvain Charlebois**, this study sheds light on the fascinating purchasing motivations of Canadians when it comes to fish and seafood. Conducted in partnership with Angus Reid, the comprehensive research compares the preferences and habits of Canadians, gathered earlier this year.

Canadians Embrace Fish and Seafood in Their Diets

The study's findings reveal that fish and seafood hold a prominent place in Canadian diets, with an impressive **86.7% of respondents indicating that they regularly include fish and seafood in their meals**. This demonstrates the enduring appeal of these oceanic delicacies among Canadians from coast to coast. Their primary reason to eat seafood is nutrition (64%), not affordability (21%).

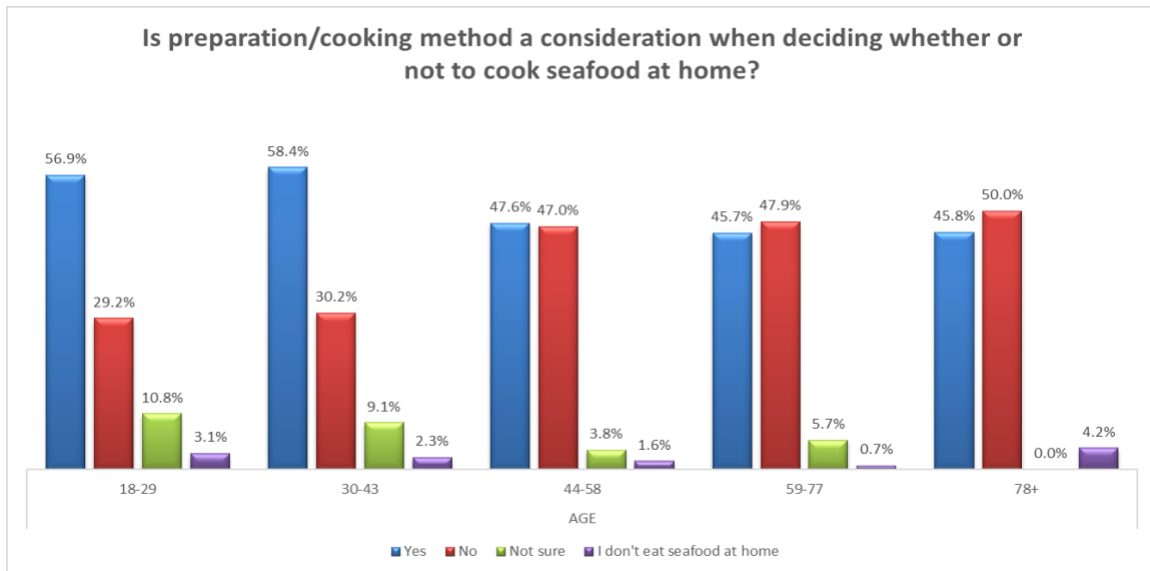
Regional Dining Preferences

When it comes to regional dining habits, the study shows that **British Columbia** leads the pack, with 45.8% of respondents from the province enjoying fish and seafood on a weekly basis. In contrast, **Quebec** has the lowest weekly consumption at 27.2%. The report also highlights that daily consumption is relatively rare, with only **Ontario** at 2.4% and **British Columbia** at 2.3% reporting daily fish and seafood consumption.



Cooking Methods Matter, Especially to Younger Canadians

Interestingly, the research uncovers a generational divide regarding the importance of cooking methods in seafood selection. Younger Canadians, including **Millennials** (56.9%) and **Gen Z** (58.4%), place a higher emphasis on preparation and cooking methods when deciding to purchase seafood for home cooking. In contrast, older generations, such as **Gen X** (47.6%), **Boomers** (45.7%), and the **Greatest Generation** (45.8%), consider these factors to a lesser extent.

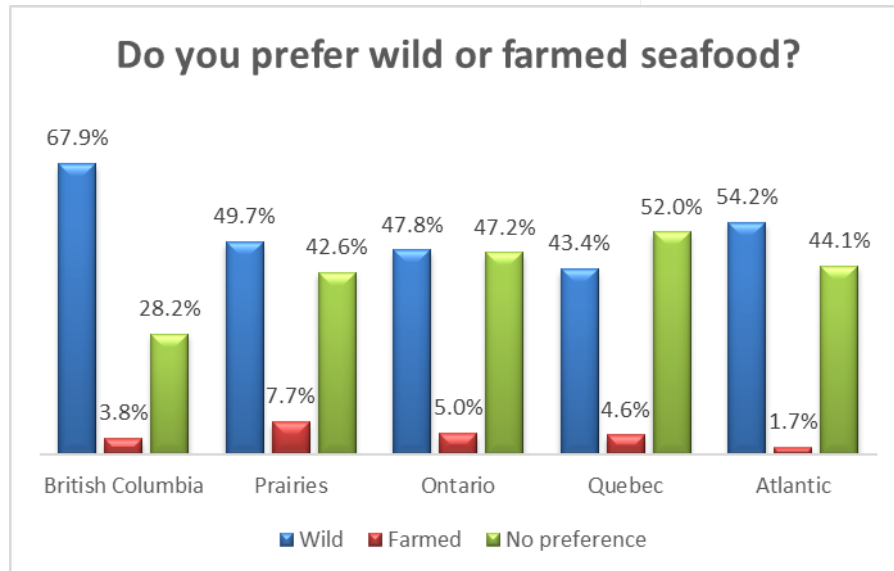


Frozen Seafood Reigns Supreme

The study reveals that frozen seafood is the most popular choice for home consumption, likely due to Canadians' familiarity with its convenience. An impressive 49.2% of **Gen Z** respondents opt for frozen seafood, compared to 39.1% of **Gen X** respondents. While fresh seafood remains popular, with 31.5% of **Gen X** preparing it at home, the percentage drops to 16.9% for **Gen Z** and 16.7% for the **Greatest Generation**.

Canadians Prefer Wild Seafood

The research confirms an overwhelming preference for wild seafood among Canadians. **British Columbians** lead this preference with 67.9%, followed by the Atlantic provinces at 54.2%, the **Prairies** at 49.7%, **Ontario** at 47.8%, and finally **Quebec** at 43.4%. Notably, **Quebec** was the only province where a higher percentage of the population expressed no preference for wild seafood at 52.0%.



Farmed seafood is sustainable

Despite the strong preference for wild seafood, most Canadians indicated that farmed seafood is perceived as a sustainable method of harvesting seafood. Income plays a significant role in this perception, with only 35.6% of respondents overall considering fish farming to be sustainable. Those with household incomes exceeding \$150,000 showed the highest agreement at 53.3%, followed by the \$35,000-\$74,999 bracket at 50.2%, and the \$75,000-\$149,000 bracket at 48.6%.

Willingness to Pay More for Certified Sustainable Seafood

When asked whether they would be willing to pay more for **certified sustainable seafood**, the study found that 40% of respondents expressed their willingness, compared to 24.2% who disagreed. Notably, women were more inclined to pay a premium for certified sustainable seafood, with 47.2% of **female** respondents agreeing, as opposed to 32.6% of **male** respondents.

Climate Change Considerations

Most people (54%) consider the **environment and climate change** as important factors when making food choices, and this is higher among **people aged 18-29** (60%) than those aged 30-77. Inherently linked with this, most people would prefer to buy seafood that was caught or farmed in Canada (74%) as opposed to imported, which could also be linked with freshness.

Ethical harvest

Half of respondents said that they consider how their seafood was treated humanely from sea to retain (i.e., how it was raised or caught or handled) as important, and more females (59%) than males (43%) agreed with this statement.

Dr. Stefanie Colombo, Co-Lead Researcher, Agri-Food Analytics Lab, Dalhousie University, added, "The study underscores the importance of education and awareness regarding sustainable seafood options. By aligning consumer preferences with responsible harvesting practices, we can contribute to the preservation of our oceans and aquatic ecosystems."

Dr. Sylvain Charlebois, Co-Lead Researcher, Agri-Food Analytics Lab, Dalhousie University, commented on the findings, stating, "Our study provides valuable insights into the complex relationships between Canadians and their seafood choices. Understanding these preferences can help drive more sustainable practices in the fisheries and aquaculture industry."

This study by the **Agri-Food Analytics Lab** at Dalhousie University, in collaboration with **Angus Reid**, serves as a valuable resource for policymakers, the seafood industry, and consumers alike, as we collectively navigate the future of Canada's Blue Economy.

For more information and access to the full report, please visit <https://www.dal.ca/sites/agri-food.html>.

About the Agri-Food Analytics Lab

The Agri-Food Analytics Lab at Dalhousie University is a research unit dedicated to providing valuable insights into the food and agriculture sectors. Their interdisciplinary team of experts conducts research on various aspects of the food supply chain, offering data-driven solutions to inform industry stakeholders and policymakers.

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