

National Pollutant Release Inventory Survey of Data Users 2024 Executive Summary

Prepared for Environment and Climate Change Canada

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The National Pollutant Release Inventory (NPRI) was established in 1992 to inform Canadians about pollutants in their communities and serves as a public inventory of releases, disposals, and transfers. Organizations in Canada, including manufacturers, mines, oil and gas operations, power plants, and sewage treatment plants are required to report to the NPRI. In all, the inventory tracks over 320 pollutants from over 7,000 facilities throughout Canada. The public inventory is intended to help Canadians understand pollutants released in their communities, encourage action to reduce pollution, and track changes in pollutants over time. Governments, companies, organizations, researchers, and citizens are all potential users of NPRI data. The NPRI website has been designed and updated to help users understand and navigate the data. Users have the ability to search for information in their area, source information for projects and presentations, read data highlights and overviews, or search datasets and the complete inventory database.

A survey of reporters and data users was conducted in 2007 to understand who was using the inventory, their opinions on reporting requirements, and satisfaction with the NPRI. A survey was commissioned in 2019 to focus on the experience of data users only. The 2023 survey of data users was commissioned to understand the needs of users and satisfaction with the inventory, particularly given the additions to the NPRI website that have taken place since the last iteration of the survey, developed to improve the users' ability to use and interpret the data. The primary objectives of the 2023 Survey of Data Users were to:

- To better understand data user needs and preferences in accessing, using, analyzing, and interpreting NPRI data.
- To determine their level of satisfaction with the current collection of data products and identify areas for improvement.
- To better understand how they use NPRI data and determine the level of interest in tools to analyze, sort and visualize the data.
- To determine the level of satisfaction with the supporting documentation provided on the website to help users interpret and use NPRI data.
- To better understand their needs in terms of communicating NPRI information.
- To compare results with previous iterations of the research.

The findings of the survey will be used in the development of policies, programs and initiatives pertaining to NPRI data, ensuring that it is accessible, useful, and intuitive to its users.

B. METHODOLOGY

An online survey was completed by 50 individuals who have used NPRI data and the website to gather information on their data needs and experiences with the inventory and website in order to make both easier to understand and navigate. The survey was conducted between November 2023 and January 2024, using two sources: a client-supplied list of known data users and an open-source link advertised through a general announcement about the survey on social media and the NPRI website on canada.ca. A series of 10 follow-up interviews were also conducted between December 2023 and January 2024 with some survey respondents who agreed to a follow up interview. Interviews ranged from 15 to 35 minutes and gathered more detailed information and context about use of the NPRI as well as sources of satisfaction and areas for improvement.

The online survey results are not comparable with 2019 when the survey was completed by 182 individuals. Further methodological details, along with efforts to increase the response rate of the online survey, can be found in Appendix A: Methodological Details.

C. KEY FINDINGS

The online survey results included 39 users of NPRI data out of the 50 respondents, representing a broad range of organizations and individuals.

The vast majority of respondents think of pollution and waste management, along with climate change, when thinking of ECCC. Other than NPRI, the majority of respondents were aware of greenhouse gas emissions, the Air Pollutant Emissions Inventory, and meteorological data in terms of ECCC data. Among those aware of other ECCC data sources, 14 – 43% have used them. Among the 11 respondents who have not used the NPRI, eight indicated that the NPRI data could benefit or be of interest to them. These respondents have not used the NPRI because they were unaware, it is not relevant to them, it is too technical, or they require a better understanding of the Inventory.

Among users of the NPRI, the majority use it for professional use. Very few access the NPRI for personal use, and if they do, they use it for both professional and personal reasons. The majority

of NPRI users used it for analysis of sectors or trends, while fewer used it to identify pollutant releases in a specific area or community, or for an environmental and/or risk assessment.

Almost all NPRI users accessed NPRI data from the NPRI Canada.ca website. Over half of NPRI users who responded to the survey started using NPRI data more than 5 years ago. The majority of NPRI users have used the NPRI Dashboard, Query Site, or Single Year Flat Files. Less than half have used NPRI information products, however, more commonly used products were the Substance Overview, Sector Overview, or Data Highlights.

The most likely types of information to have been accessed in the NPRI are data for specific pollutants or years, according to three in four users. Over half have accessed data for specific facilities, industry sectors, or geographic locations. Over four in ten have accessed release data of specific medium. Fewer have accessed the sector overviews, data for transfers and disposals, or ECCC analysis of the data. Several respondents have accessed NPRI data integration products or Indigenous Series. Six in ten NPRI users have combined NPRI data with other data.

D. NOTE TO READERS

Results are presented in text and charts. Due to the relatively low number of completed responses, results from 2023 are not comparable to previous iterations of the survey. Further, it is not possible to describe findings for specific segments of the sample. Findings in this report should be interpreted with caution. As such, the number of cases responding are presented along with percentage results to illustrate the quantity of individuals responding to an individual question.

Readers should also note that survey findings are presented in the report in terms of valid percentage of responses, excluding those who said “don’t know”, “not applicable”, or otherwise did not provide a response on any given question. Results may also not total to 100% due to rounding.

Results of the interviews are interspersed with the survey findings in relevant thematic areas throughout the report highlighted in grey. In some cases, results described may be based on only two or three interviews, typically noted as “a few” or “several”. In some cases, results are described on the basis of input from one participant, also reflected in the use of quotes meant to be illustrative of key points. Therefore, qualitative findings are meant to be illustrative and help to provide added context to the survey findings and should be interpreted with caution.

E. CONTRACT VALUE

The total contract value of this research is \$45,476.85 (including HST).

F. POLITICAL NEUTRALITY CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify as Senior Officer of EKOS Research Associates Inc. that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Policy on Communications and Federal Identity and the Directive on the Management of Communications. Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.

Signed by: 

Susan Galley, Vice President, EKOS Research Associates Inc.