

# A PROFILE OF FISHING AND FISH CONSUMPTION IN THE DETROIT RIVER AREA OF CONCERN

The Detroit River Area is internationally renowned for its abundant Muskellunge, Walleye, White Bass, and Yellow Perch, as well as other sport fish species.



To better understand fish consumption habits, in 2019 the Detroit River Canadian Cleanup (DRCC) initiated an online and in person fish consumption survey.



# RESTRICTIONS ON FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSUMPTION IN THE DETROIT RIVER



In 1987, the Detroit River was identified as an Area of Concern due to severe degradation to the aquatic environment due, in part, to decades of industrial and municipal development along the river and unregulated discharges to it. While discharges to the river have been regulated since the early 1960's, legacy contaminants such as mercury persist in the environment and accumulate in fish (and wildlife) tissue to levels that can pose a human health risk. The Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption beneficial use is considered impaired for the Canadian Detroit River AOC.

The DRCC is in the process of assessing the Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption BUI in the Detroit River based on the delisting criteria listed on the right. Smallmouth bass were also included in the assessment as a fourth indicator species. This fish consumption survey of local anglers was undertaken by the DRCC to provide additional information regarding how often indicator species are consumed from the river and if people are consuming more of these species than restrictions allow. The collection of this information will help inform the assessment of this beneficial use.

*"The status of this beneficial use impairment (BUI) will be considered not impaired. When consumption advisories for indicator fish species (e.g. walleye, brown bullhead, and largemouth bass) given for the sensitive population in the AOC are similar to upstream and downstream non-AOC Great Lakes reference areas due to contaminants from locally-controllable sources".*

## SURVEY RESULTS from 355 Respondents



**231**  
respondents identified eating the fish they catch from the Detroit River

### Respondents have been fishing on the river for...

More than 5 years



**61%**  
of people

1 to 5 years



**22%**  
of people

Less than 1 year



**17%**  
of people

### Reasons why respondents don't eat the fish they catch from the Detroit River

I like to practice catch & release **80 people**

I think the water is polluted **24 people**

I think the fish are diseased/unhealthy **20 people**

Other **17 people**

I prefer to purchase fish at the market or store **7 people**

I don't like fish **6 people**

I don't like the taste **5 people**

## Who do respondents share their fish with?

**140 people**



Spouse/partner

**55 people**



Children under 15

## How much and how often are Detroit River fish eaten?

**91%**

of respondents eat 8 or less meals per month on Detroit River caught fish



### Most respondents eat 8 oz of Detroit River fish in a typical meal

**68%**  
Consumed



**8 oz**

**21%**  
Consumed



**4 oz**

**6%**  
Consumed



**>4 oz**

**5% consumed "Other"**

## Consumption of Detroit River Indicator Species

**89%**  
Consumed



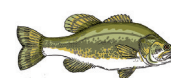
Walleye

**37%**  
Consumed



Smallmouth Bass

**33%**  
Consumed



Largemouth Bass

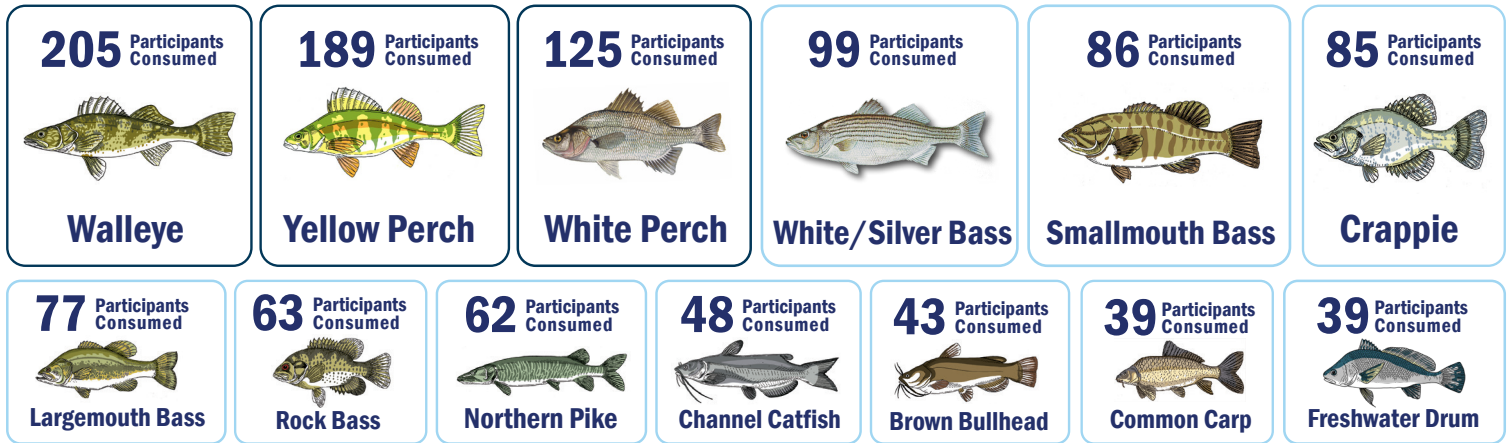
**19%**  
Consumed



Brown Bullhead

## DESIRED FISH SPECIES TO EAT

The top three consumed fish in the Detroit River were identified as Walleye, Yellow Perch, and White Perch.

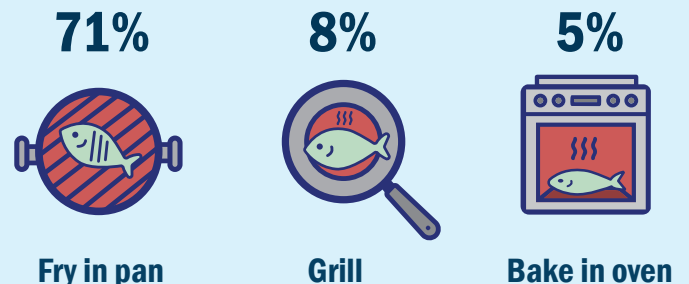


## CONSUMING FISH PARTS AND COOKING DETROIT RIVER FISH

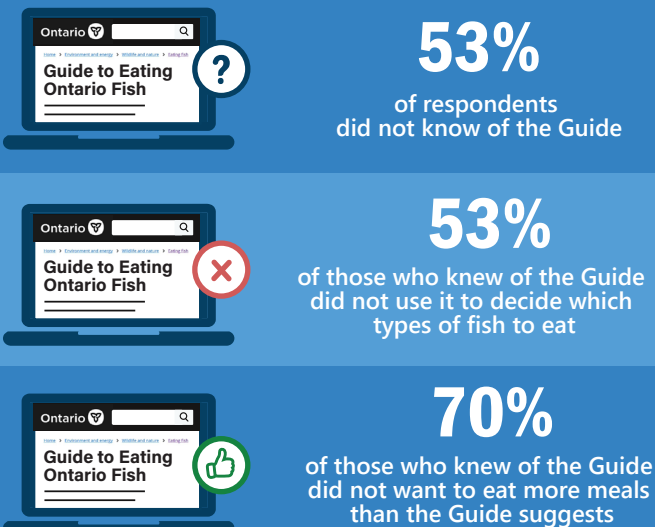
### Part of fish most consumed from Detroit River



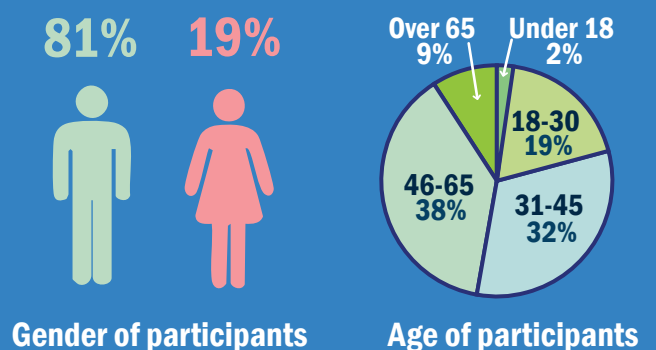
### Popular methods used to cook fish from Detroit River



## THE GUIDE TO EATING ONTARIO FISH



## WHO TOOK THE SURVEY?



**92%** of survey respondents spoke English in their home



View the guide to eating Ontario fish here: [www.ontario.ca/page/guide-eating-ontario-fish](http://www.ontario.ca/page/guide-eating-ontario-fish)



# SUMMARY

- Many anglers consume fish from the Detroit River, although a small number do enjoy catch and release fishing.
- Popular species that are consumed from the river include walleye, yellow and white perch, and white/silver bass. The majority of survey respondents reported eating 8 meals or less of Detroit River fish per month, with 8 oz of fish (on average) being consumed each meal.
- Fish fillets without skin are most consumed and fish are often fried in a pan, grilled, or baked in the oven.
- Fish caught from the Detroit River are safe to eat and following the advice provided in the Guide to Eating Ontario Fish is recommended to minimize exposure to contaminants.
- The information gathered from this survey will help inform the assessment of the Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption BUI, ensuring that fish consumption restrictions are viewed within the context of fish consumption patterns in the Detroit River AOC.



**DETROIT RIVER**  
**CANADIAN**  
**CLEANUP**

[detroitriver.ca](http://detroitriver.ca)