

Young Adults Are Canada's Leading Litterbugs, Poll Shows

One in three Canadians admit to littering, but help is on the way: 75,000 expected to register for the TD Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup in September

TORONTO and VANCOUVER, August 20, 2009 – One out of every three Canadians — and half of all young adults ages 18 to 24 – admit to littering, according to a new poll sponsored by the TD Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup (TD GCSC). A national environmental conservation initiative, the TD GCSC was started by the Vancouver Aquarium in 1994 and is expected to draw some 75,000 registrants to clean up over 1,500 shoreline sites across Canada from September 19 to 27.

The poll indicates that while more than one third (39 per cent) of Canadians claim they take action when they see someone littering — from telling the litterbug to pick it up to quietly doing it themselves — 20 per cent of these do-gooders admit to littering themselves.

“We are encouraged to see that a fair number of Canadians are willing to take action against litter, but many of us still need to clean up our act,” said Mary Desjardins, Executive Director, TD Friends of the Environment Foundation. “By recruiting thousands of Canadians to register each year, the cleanup has become a catalyst for increasing our nation’s awareness and appreciation of our beautiful natural shorelines.”

Who Are You Calling a Litterbug?

- Four per cent of Canadians admit to littering every day.
- Young adults (18-24 year olds) litter most frequently, with 17 per cent admitting that they do it at least once a week — almost twice as often as 25-34 year olds (eight per cent) and 35-44 year olds (seven per cent).
- Adults age 25-34 led the pack in doing nothing if they see someone littering (63 per cent).
- Canadians over 65 are the most litter-conscientious, with 86 per cent saying they “never” litter.
- Women definitely are more in tune with Mother Nature — at least when it comes to litter: 74 per cent of women say they never litter, whereas only 63 per cent of men say they never drop their trash.

The Hit List

Not all junk is created equal. When asked what type of shoreline litter causes their blood to boil, 16 per cent pointed the finger at plastic bottles, of which 36,554 were found during last year’s TD GCSC. Plastic bags came in a close second (13 per cent) followed by beverage cans and food waste tied at eight per cent, with cigarette butts in fourth place at seven per cent.

“Ironically, it is the cigarette butt that is the number one item found annually through the TD Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup,” said Jill Dwyer, Program Manager, TD Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup. “I think people often don’t perceive cigarette butts as litter,

yet it is one of the most harmful litter items, affecting both animals -- through ingestion-- and the environment through leaching harmful chemicals into our precious water sources."

Taking Out the Trash

Putting litterbugs in their place isn't easy, but one in ten (11 per cent) brave Canadians claim they speak up when they see a stranger littering, with an additional 13 per cent who do the same if the litterbug doesn't appear threatening. One in four (28 per cent) quietly pick up after the litterbugs. While more than half of us will take some form of action, 44 per cent said they "do nothing" when they see someone litter.

Men are more likely to tell a litterbug to pick up their trash (14 per cent) than women (8 percent) but women are more likely to actually pick up the litter themselves (33 per cent versus men at 23 per cent).

Get involved

The TD Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup is one of the largest cleanups in the world. It is a national Vancouver Aquarium conservation initiative encouraging Canadians to have a positive impact on their local environment by removing harmful litter from their local shorelines, including ponds, streams, rivers, lakes and oceans. The 2009 TD GCSC begins on International Coastal Cleanup Day, September 19, and runs to September 27, 2009. To volunteer as a site coordinator, register your own cleanup team or join an existing one, visit www.tdgcsc.ca.

TD Bank Financial Group has been a proud sponsor of the TD Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup, through its TD Friends of the Environment Foundation for more than 13 years. The TD GCSC began in 1994 as a small beach cleanup with a handful of employees from the Vancouver Aquarium who wanted to participate in the Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup. In 2008, a record-breaking 63,491 Canadians registered for 1,531 sites and removed 135,467 kilograms of garbage from a collective distance of 2,152 kilometres.

Note to Editors: Media dive events will take place across Canada in September to help locate some of the more unusual and large trash items found in our waterways. Divers will be going into the water in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton and St. Johns. For more information contact Aurora Bonin or Jean Fong as listed below.

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About the Survey

The survey was conducted by Harris / Decima on behalf of TD Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup from July 16 to July 21, 2009. The telephone survey is based on a randomly selected sample of 1,007 Canadians ages 18+. The margin of error for a sample of this size is +/- 3.1 per cent.

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