

# 2016 TOWN OF WASHINGTON FIREWISE SURVEY: STATISTICAL SUMMARY

## YOUR PROPERTY IN THE TOWN OF WASHINGTON

The following questions are specific to the property you own in the Town of Washington. If you own more than one property in town, base your responses according to the property you own that includes a residence or seasonal home. If you own multiple properties with homes, please answer the questions based on the property you have owned the longest.

1. **How long have you owned your property in the Town of Washington? \_\_\_\_years (if less than one year, enter 1).**

(Outliers of 100 and 117 removed)

(Years) Range = 1-80

Mean = 20.5

Median = 17

Mode = 10

1-2 years = 8%

10-19 years = 30%

3-9 years = 16%

20-29 years = 21%

30+ years = 25%

2. **Where is your primary (or mailing) address located?** 75% Wisconsin 25% Another state

3. **Which of the following best describes your property? Check one.**

39% Permanent residence

48% Vacation/seasonal home

9% Vacant lot or woodland (no buildings)

2% Land with garage, shed, camper, etc. (no home)

2% Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_ (See open-end comments)

If there is not a home or cabin on your property, skip ahead to question 6.

4. **Are there any buildings within 30 feet of your home/cabin?** 64% Yes 36% No

If yes, what kind?

17% Neighbor

60% Detached garage

33% Shed

9% Other (See open-end comments)

5. **From the list below, check all that describe your property:**

51% I can see my house from the road all year

86% My address/fire number is easy to see from the road

72% My driveway base is at least 14 feet wide

77% My driveway has at least 14 feet of vertical clearance

61% There is room for a fire engine to turn around on my property

79% My driveway is not gated

59% My driveway has less than a 10% grade

64% My driveway is less than 500 feet long

86% My driveway has a firm base

1% My property does not have a driveway



**12. What obstacles, if any, prevent you from taking action to prepare your buildings for wildfire? Check all that apply.**

- 27% I'm not sure what to do
- 23% I don't want to cut down any trees
- 23% I didn't know there was a wildfire threat
- 22% I'm not that concerned/nothing prevents me from taking action
- 20% I don't have money to do the work
- 17% My home/property is already Firewise
- 12% I am physically unable to do the work
- 11% That's what my homeowner's insurance is for
- 8% I don't have the time to do the work
- 13% Other, please specify:

**13. What do you do on a regular basis to maintain the area around your buildings? Check all that apply.**

- 88% Keep debris raked away from my home
- 86% Remove dead trees and brush
- 85% Keep the grass short
- 83% Remove needles and leaves from roof and gutters
- 73% Prune tree limbs/cut down trees
- 49% Clean out needles/leaves from under deck
- 3% Other, please specify:
- 1% None of the above

**14. Over the last five years have you...**

Conducted open burning (leaves, brush, trash,) on your property?

38% Yes      62% No

Taken leaves or brush from this property to any brush collection site?

24% Yes      76% No

Sought out information on wildfire prevention or preparedness?

9% Yes      91% No

Attended a Firewise/fire prevention presentation or workshop?

1% Yes      99% No

Picked up a Firewise/fire prevention brochure from a meeting, event, or location?

8% Yes      92% No

**15. How willing or unwilling would you be to pile woody debris (small trees or branches) at the end of your driveway if someone would come by and pick it up at no cost to you if it was offered?**

- 12% Not at all willing      25% Fairly willing
- 7% Not too willing      18% Unsure      34% Very willing
- 4% My property does not have a driveway

**16. Are you aware that the Town of Washington has a brush collection site?**

40% Yes      60% No      If you answered no, skip ahead to question 18.

**17. Did you know that the brush collection site is open 2 weeks in the spring and 2 weeks in the fall?**

56% Yes      44% No

**18. How willing or unwilling would you be to bring woody debris to the town's brush collection site if it was moved to the current transfer station and opened during the same hours?**

14% Not at all willing      28% Fairly willing  
15% Not too willing      25% Unsure      18% Very willing

**19. How willing or unwilling would you be to have a member from the local fire department come to your property to talk to you about wildfire hazards on your property at no cost to you if it was offered?**

14% Not at all willing      33% Fairly willing  
10% Not too willing      24% Unsure      20% Very willing

**20. How willing or unwilling would you be to attend a free workshop to learn more about wildfires and how to reduce the amount of damage that could be done to your property if it was offered?**

13% Not at all willing      31% Fairly willing  
14% Not too willing      26% Unsure      16% Very willing

## **WILDFIRES AND FIRE PREPAREDNESS**

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We would like to learn more about your knowledge of wildfire risk in Wisconsin and the Town of Washington. We would also like to learn about your views on the actions that have been taken in the town to lessen the risk of a catastrophic wildfire. Your answers will help us determine which projects are having the most impact on the Town and which will be continued.

**21. Have you personally witnessed or experienced a wildfire anywhere (including areas outside of Wisconsin)?**

34% Yes      66% No

**22. In which season do you think most wildfires occur in Wisconsin?**

35% Spring (March, April, May)  
41% Summer (June, July, August)  
24% Fall (September, October, November)

**23. From the list below, what do you believe is the ONE most common cause of wildfires in Wisconsin?**

**Check one.**

41% Debris burning (brush, leaves, grass, tree limbs, trash)  
21% Lightning  
13% Discarded smoking materials (cigarettes, cigars, etc.)  
16% Campfires  
2% Power lines  
2% Arson  
2% Equipment (vehicles, ATV, exhaust, sparks, logging/farm machinery)  
1% Fireworks  
1% Ash disposal

**24. How many wildfires do you think occur each year, on average, in Wisconsin? We know this could be a difficult question to answer. Please just provide us with your best estimate: \_\_\_\_\_**

Range = 0-5,000      Mean = 174.5      Median = 25      Mode = 10 and 100  
(10,000 and 20,000 removed as outliers)  
0-9 = 21%              20-49 = 19%              100-499 = 23%  
10-19 = 18%              50-99 = 10%              500+ = 9%

**25. How many wildfires do you think occur each year, on average, in the Town of Washington? Please just provide us with your best estimate: \_\_\_\_\_**

Range = 0-700      Mean = 8.6      Median = 2      Mode = 1  
0 = 13%              3-9 = 23%  
1-2 = 42%              10-19 = 14%      20+ = 8%

**26. What do you think the wildfire risk is in the Town of Washington?**

5% Very Low              10% High  
28% Low              55% Moderate              2% Very High

**27. Community Wildfire Protection Plans identify activities that can be done to increase wildfire awareness and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires. From the list below, please rank the top 3 activities you believe the town most needs. Write a 1 next to the most important need, a 2 next to the second most important need and a 3 next to the third most important need.**

72% More public education on wildfire prevention and preparedness  
32% More vegetation management on private property (at owner's expense)  
31% Requirements that all new construction in high fire risk areas have fire-resistant building materials  
27% Property owners serving on advisory committees to create wildfire risk reduction strategies  
27% More firefighting personnel and equipment  
25% More timber harvest (logging) on public lands  
21% Ordinances requiring people to remove overgrown vegetation (at owner's expense)  
15% Nothing, none of these activities are needed  
6% Other

**28. Do you believe that the implementation of a Community Wildfire Protection Plan will help to reduce the risk of a destructive wildfire in the town?**

10% Definitely yes              12% Probably not  
39% Probably yes              38% I'm not sure              1% Definitely not

**29. Education is an important element in any wildfire preparedness plan. Which of the following topics, if any, would you like to learn more about? Check all that apply.**

- 46% How the Town of Washington Community Wildfire Protection Plan is being implemented
- 45% How to make my property more Firewise
- 40% Wildfire history of the area
- 33% How to prevent wildfires
- 29% Local burning regulations
- 28% General forest health topics
- 25% How to safely burn leaves and brush
- 24% Controlled burns
- 18% How to have a safe campfire
- 12% How to make my driveway accessible to fire engines
- 1% How to become a firefighter
- 1% Other: (See open-end comments)
- 8% Nothing, I'm not interested
- 5% Nothing, I know all of the above

**30. What are your preferred methods of receiving information? Check up to THREE.**

- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| 65% direct mailing                          | 3% conference/workshop       |
| 40% info included with tax bill             | 2% fair or other local event |
| 36% newsletter                              | 2% webinar                   |
| 22% email                                   | 2% Facebook/Twitter          |
| 21% web site                                | 1% one on one discussions    |
| 14% newspaper                               | 10% TV/radio                 |
| 5% I do not want to receive any information |                              |

**31. If there is anything more you'd like to tell us, please do so:**

- 14% responded

**If you would like receive wildfire prevention and preparedness information in the future, you can enter your email or mailing address here. This information will be kept separate from your responses.**

**Thank you for taking this survey!**

## ANALYSIS BY YEARS OF OWNERSHIP

Table 1: Years of ownership by perception of wildfire risk to property (Question 6)

Risk perception	1-2 years	3-9 years	10-19 years	20-29 years	30+ years
Very low	20%	12%	14%	9%	9%
Low	23	42	42	42	37
Moderate	49	43	36	43	43
High	9	3	7	4	9
Very high	0	0	2	2	2

No statistical significant difference.

**Observation:** A statistical relationship was not found between length of ownership and perception of wildfire risk to property. Note that regardless of years of ownership, at least nearly one-half perceived a low or very low wildfire risk to their property.

Table 2: Years of ownership by concern for wildfire affecting property in next five years (Question 7)

Concern level	1-2 years	3-9 years	10-19 years	20-29 years	30+ years
Very concerned	6%	2%	3%	4%	4%
Somewhat	29	27	28	34	32
Not too	49	53	56	55	51
Not at all	17	18	13	8	14

No statistical significant difference.

**Observation:** A statistical relationship was not found between length of ownership and concern that a wildfire will affect the respondents' property in the next five years. Regardless of years of ownership, the modal response was "Not too concerned."

Table 3: Years of ownership by self-assessment of property being Firewise (Question 11)  
(Percent of those with a home or cabin on property)

Firewise assessment	1-2 years	3-9 years	10-19 years	20-29 years	30+ years
Very Firewise	31%	23%	24%	23%	21%
Could use some work	52	54	60	62	64
Not at all Firewise	17	23	16	15	15

No statistical significant difference.

**Observation:** A statistical relationship was not found between length of ownership and self-assessment of Firewise buildings. Regardless of years of ownership, the modal response was "Could use some work."

Table 4: Years of ownership by perceived wildfire risk level for Town of Washington (Question 26)

Perceived risk level	1-2 years	3-9 years	10-19 years	20-29 years	30+ years
Very low	6%	8%	6%	4%	4%
Low	29	29	27	25	31
Moderate	54	52	57	60	53
High	9	11	9	11	10
Very high	3	2	2	1	3

No statistical significant difference.

**Observation:** A statistical relationship was not found between length of ownership and perceived wildfire risk level for a wildfire in the Town of Washington. Regardless of years of ownership, the modal response was “Moderate.”

Table 5: Years of ownership by obstacles preventing Firewise actions (Question 12)

Firewise obstacles (percent checked)	1-2 years	3-9 years	10-19 years	20-29 years	30+ years	Sig.
Nothing, home is Firewise	32%	9%	18%	19%	13%	.053
Unaware of wildfire threat	25%	19%	22%	22%	29%	---
Unsure what to do	32%	36%	26%	28%	21%	---
Purpose of homeowner’s insurance	4%	14%	9%	8%	17%	---
Physically unable to do work	0	9%	14%	10%	17%	---
No time to do work	4%	9%	7%	6%	10%	---
Don’t have money to do the work	18%	15%	21%	18%	22%	---
Don’t want to cut down trees	14%	25%	18%	24%	29%	---
Not concerned/Nothing prevents me	11%	22%	19%	21%	26%	---
Other	14%	10%	13%	17%	10%	---

**Observation:** Although numerous substantive differences are found between the ownership groups, only one statistical difference in obstacles preventing Firewise actions was noted. The newest residents of the Town of Washington, those with one or two years of ownership, were most likely (32%) to indicate that their property was already Firewise ( $p < .053$ ). This finding corroborates that presented in Table 3.

NOTE: Properties without buildings were directed to skip these items.

Table 6: Years of ownership by Firewise maintenance actions (Question 13)

Firewise maintenance (percent checked)	1-2 years	3-9 years	10-19 years	20-29 years	30+ years	Sig.
Remove dead trees and brush	93%	83%	87%	83%	88%	---
Keep grass short	97%	81%	84%	90%	86%	---
Prune tree limbs/cut down trees	72%	73%	77%	73%	73%	---
Remove needles/leaves from roof/gutters	72%	84%	81%	84%	88%	---
Remove needles/leaves from under deck	59%	52%	46%	48%	50%	---
Keep debris raked away from home	90%	91%	84%	90%	90%	---
None of the above	0%	0	1%	0	1%	---
Other	0%	2%	4%	1%	4%	---

**Observation:** Regardless of years of ownership, nearly all respondents (at least 99%) participate in some form of Firewise maintenance. Although substantive differences are found between the ownership groups, no statistical differences in Firewise maintenance actions were noted.



Table 7: Years of ownership by 5-year participation in various wildfire mitigation practices (Question 14)

Behavior (percent checked)	1-2 years	3-9 years	10-19 years	20-29 years	30+ years	Sig.
Burned leaves, brush, trash on property	32%	42%	34%	46%	37%	---
Taken leaves or brush to collection site	32%	23%	25%	15%	27%	---
Sought information on wildfire prevention	12%	11%	6%	9%	9%	---
Attended Firewise presentation / workshop	0	2%	2%	0	2%	---
Picked up Firewise brochure	12%	5%	7%	8%	11%	---

**Observation:** Years of ownership had little to do with participation in wildfire mitigation practices. Although substantive differences are found between the ownership groups (e.g., taken leaves or brush to collection site), statistical differences in Firewise mitigation practices were not noted.

Table 8: Years of ownership by willingness to participate in various actions to reduce fire potential (Questions 15 and 18 through 20)

Behavior (percent checked)	1-2 years	3-9 Years	10-19 years	20-29 years	30+ years	Sig.
Bring brush to new collection site						---
Not at all willing	20%	13%	14%	7%	17%	
No too	14	16	14	19	14	
Unsure	17	19	29	27	24	
Fairly	29	32	20	35	30	
Very willing	20	21	22	12	15	
Pile woody debris at driveway end						.017
Not at all willing	15%	9%	10%	12%	16%	
No too	12	13	6	2	6	
Unsure	6	11	23	16	25	
Fairly	12	27	28	36	19	
Very willing	55	41	32	34	33	
Meet with fire specialist on property						---
Not at all willing	14%	15%	12%	12%	17%	
No too	3	12	10	8	13	
Unsure	11	19	24	24	28	
Fairly	37	37	37	38	21	
Very willing	34	17	18	17	21	
Attend free workshop						---
Not at all willing	9%	17%	12%	12%	15%	
No too	14	16	12	11	14	
Unsure	17	23	31	20	27	
Fairly	40	28	30	42	27	
Very willing	20	16	14	16	17	

**Observation:** Although substantive differences are found between the ownership groups (e.g., willingness to pile debris at the end of one's driveway, attending a free workshop on wildfire reduction actions), only one statistical difference was noted; the newest residents of the Town of Washington were most willing (55%) to pile their woody debris at the end of their driveways ( $p < .017$ ). Approximately one-third of the residents with at least 10 years of ownership were willing to do the same.

Table 9: Years of ownership by belief that CWPP will help reduce the risk of destructive fire (Question 28)

Level of support	1-2 years	3-9 Years	10-19 years	20-29 years	30+ years
Definitely yes	17%	9%	9%	9%	8%
Probably yes	34	42	42	41	37
Unsure	37	40	38	37	37
Probably no	11	9	11	12	15
Definitely no	0	0	0	1	3

No statistical significant difference.

**Observation:** A statistical relationship was not found between years of ownership and respondents' belief that the Community Wildfire Protection Plan will help reduce the risk of a destructive fire. A majority of respondents believed that having a plan in place will reduce the risk posed by a wildfire, the exception being the longest-term residents with less than one-half (45%) supporting the benefits from a CWPP.

### ANALYSIS BY PROPERTY TYPE (PERMANENT RESIDENCE / SEASONAL HOME / NO HOME)

Table 10: Property type by perception of wildfire risk to property (Question 6)

Risk perception	Permanent Home	Seasonal home	No home
Very low	11%	10%	20%
Low	40	39	33
Moderate	40	43	42
High	8	6	2
Very high	1	2	2

No statistical significant difference.

**Observation:** A statistical relationship was not found between property type and perception of wildfire risk to property. Note that regardless of property type, at least nearly one-half (49%) of the residents perceived a low or very low wildfire risk to their property.

Table 11: Property type by concern for wildfire affecting property in next five years (Question 7)

Concern Level	Permanent home	Seasonal home	No home
Very concerned	5%	3%	0%
Somewhat	35	28	22
Not too	50	56	60
Not at all	11	14	18

No statistical significant difference.

**Observation:** A statistical relationship was not found between property type and concern that a wildfire will affect the respondents' property in the next five years. Regardless of property type, the modal response was "Not too concerned."

Table 12: Property type by self-assessment of property being Firewise (Question 11)  
(Percent of those with a home or cabin on property)

Firewise assessment	Permanent home	Seasonal home	No home
Very Firewise	27%	20%	
Could use some work	63	56	
Not at all Firewise	10	23	

**Observation:** A significantly higher percentage of permanent residences were identified as needing some work to become Firewise (63%) while a significantly higher percentage of seasonal residences were identified as not at all being Firewise (23%) ( $p < .006$ ).

Table 13: Property type by perceived wildfire risk level for the Town of Washington (Question 26)

Perceived risk level	Permanent Home	Seasonal home	No home
Very low	2%	6%	14%
Low	27	28	34
Moderate	58	56	36
High	11	8	14
Very high	2	2	2

**Observation:** Respondents owning properties that do not include a home perceived significantly lower (48%) wildfire risks for the town than did permanent (29%) and seasonal (34%) residents ( $p < .047$ ).

Table 14: Property type by obstacles preventing Firewise actions (Question 12)

Firewise obstacles (percent checked)	Permanent home	Seasonal home	No home	Sig.
Nothing, home is Firewise	21%	13%		---
Unaware of wildfire threat	23%	23%		---
Unsure what to do	26%	29%		---
Purpose of homeowner's insurance	8%	15%		---
Physically unable to do work	15%	9%		---
No time to do work	4%	10%		---
Don't have money to do the work	24%	17%		---
Don't want to cut down trees	20%	25%		---
Not concerned/Nothing prevents me	23%	21%		---
Other	11%	14%		---

No statistical significant difference.

**Observation:** Regardless of permanent or seasonal residency, a statistical relationship was not found with obstacles preventing Firewise actions.

NOTE: Properties without buildings were directed to skip these items.

Table 15: Property type by Firewise maintenance actions (Question 13)

Firewise maintenance (percent checked)	Permanent home	Seasonal home	No Home	Sig.
Remove dead trees and brush	85%	89%		---
Keep grass short	94%	80%		.000
Prune tree limbs/cut down trees	75%	73%		---
Remove needles/leaves from roof/gutters	87%	82%		---
Remove needles/leaves from under deck	55%	44%		.025
Keep debris raked away from home	91%	87%		---
None of the above	0	2%		---
Other	2%	1%		---

**Observation:** Regardless of property type, nearly all respondents (at least 98%) participate in some form of Firewise maintenance. Two statistical differences were noted between the property types and Firewise maintenance actions. Permanent residents were significantly more likely than seasonal residents to report that they keep short the grass on their property (94% and 80%, respectively;  $p < .000$ ) and that they remove needles and leaves from under their decks (55% and 44%, respectively;  $p < .025$ ).

NOTE: Properties without buildings were directed to skip these items.

Table 16: Property type by 5-year participation in various wildfire mitigation practices (Question 14)

Behavior (percent checked)	Permanent home	Seasonal home	No home	Sig.
Burned leaves, brush, trash on property	45%	40%	9%	.000
Taken leaves or brush to collection site	20%	30%	7%	.002
Sought information on wildfire prevention	7%	10%	4%	---
Attended Firewise presentation / workshop	2%	1%	0	---
Picked up Firewise brochure	7%	8%	11%	---

**Observation:** Statistical differences between property type and wildfire mitigation practices can be explained by the presence or absence of a home on the property. Owners of properties without a home, meaning properties that would presumably require less frequent maintenance, were significantly less likely to report that they burned leaves, brush or trash on their property ( $p < .000$ ) and that they took leaves or brush to a collection site ( $p < .002$ ).

Table 17: Property type by willingness to participate in various actions to reduce fire potential (Questions 15 and 18 through 20)

Behavior (percent checked)	Permanent home	Seasonal home	No home	Sig.
Bring brush to new collection site				---
Not at all willing	14%	13%	19%	
No too	11%	18%	17%	
Unsure	24%	23%	40%	
Fairly	32%	27%	21%	
Very willing	19%	19%	5%	
Pile woody debris at driveway end				---
Not at all willing	13%	11%	14%	
No too	6%	9%	3%	
Unsure	13%	22%	35%	
Fairly	32%	23%	17%	
Very willing	36%	35%	31%	
Meet with fire specialist on property				.062
Not at all willing	12%	13%	23%	
No too	9%	1%	9%	
Unsure	20%	24%	39%	
Fairly	37%	33%	21%	
Very willing	22%	19%	9%	
Attend free workshop				---
Not at all willing	11%	12%	23%	
No too	13%	13%	21%	
Unsure	23%	26%	32%	
Fairly	34%	33%	21%	
Very willing	19%	15%	5%	

**Observation:** Property type had little to do with willingness to participate in three wildfire reduction practices. One weak statistical difference was noted; owners of properties without homes were somewhat less willing than other property owners to meet with a wildfire specialist on their property ( $p < .062$ ). This difference is likely explained by perceived lack of need from not having buildings on the property.

Table 18: Property type by belief that CWPP will help reduce the risk of destructive fire (Question 28)

Level of support	Permanent home	Seasonal home	No home
Definitely yes	11%	9%	12%
Probably yes	40%	42%	28%
Unsure	35%	37%	49%
Probably no	13%	13%	9%
Definitely no	1%	1%	2%

No statistical significant difference.

**Observation:** Although a statistical relationship was not found between property type and respondents' belief that the Community Wildfire Protection Plan will help reduce the risk of a destructive fire, those without a home were more skeptical of the plan's ability to help prevent wildfires.