

PUBLIC VIEWS ON SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES OVER A 33-YEAR PERIOD IN IDAHO, USA

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ABSTRACT

National surveys have indicated that Idaho is one of the most desirable places to live in the USA. Compared to other states, it has abundant important resources, including water, renewable electricity, low crime rates, open space for cities and towns to develop and grow, outstanding recreational opportunities, a high quality of life, and one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country. As a result, Idaho has been one of the fastest-growing states and its population has doubled since 1982. The purpose of this study is to determine the perceptions of Idahoans on how the state is addressing sustainable development goals over a period of 33 years – between 1990 and 2023. Public views on repeated measures surveys were collected on the following sustainability indicators: (1) quality of life, (2) population growth, (3) development, (4) community planning, (5) transportation systems, (6) recreational opportunities, (7) agriculture, (8) forest management, (9) electricity, (10) range management and (11) water resource management. The results of the 33-year survey study indicated that water resource management, renewable electricity and population growth management were considered the most important issues by 63%, 45% and 34% of survey respondents, respectively. A large majority of the public thought that over time, water resources and renewable electricity were approaching sustainability. However, many Idahoans worried that increasing population growth negatively impacted sustainability goals, especially in the areas of development, community planning and transportation systems. Even though a majority of respondents felt that there was a high quality of life in Idaho, fast population growth had a negative impact on it. Over 52% of the survey respondents in 2020 thought that fast population growth was unsustainable, compared to only 21% in 1990. When provided with a scale from 0 to 100, Idahoans assigned sustainability index values of 81, 74, 71, 55, 52, 45, 43, 42, 40, 39 and 34 to electricity, quality of life, recreational opportunities, water resources management, forest management, agriculture, transportation, development, range management, community planning and population growth management, respectively.

Keywords: sustainability ratings, water resource management, renewable electricity, population growth.

1 INTRODUCTION

The actual idea of sustainability came into being in the late 1970s, and within a decade it became an important concept in social, environmental, economic and business circles [1]. Within the last 20 years, the words sustainable or sustainability have become mainstream across planet Earth. In the scientific literature, paper titles bearing the word sustainability or sustainable were absent prior to 1970. However, today Google searches return over 100,000,000 hits with the word sustainable. On the other hand, within the scientific literature, searches on Google Scholar return in excess of 100,000 hits for the word sustainability.

At its best sustainability seeks to counteract economic systems that drain Earth of its finite resources including fresh water, topsoil, forests, carbon-based energy resources and biodiversity [1]–[3]. Albert Bartlett developed an elaborate definition of sustainability that focuses on the risks associated with high population growth, carbon-based fuels and unchecked economic growth to the long-term existence of humans on Earth [4]. Over the years, sustainability has moved from a novel concept to being important in many international treaties. Today, sustainability has become a high priority for many individuals, governments,



corporations and non-profit organizations [1]. A sustainable society includes the four e's – environment, economics, equity and education.

Many people claim to be sustainable and to promote sustainability practices [3]. In practice, people that espouse sustainability sit on a continuum that includes sustainable practices on one end and unsustainable practices on the other end. One is never 100% sustainable; however, the closer one is to the sustainable end of the continuum the closer we get to long-term sustainability within a society.

A sustainability index has traditionally been used by businesses to measure its sustainability across socio-environmental factors. More recently, sustainability indexes have been used to determine the health and long-term viability of human practices or use of Earth resources today and a legacy for future generations [5], [6]. Several studies have developed and used sustainability indices to compare practices across the planet, region, country and local areas [7]–[9].

Compared to other states, Idaho has abundant natural and people resources, including water, electricity, low crime rates, outstanding recreational opportunities, a high quality of life, one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country, and plenty of open space for cities and towns to develop and grow further. Consequently, Idaho has been one of the fastest-growing states, and its population has doubled since 1982. Previous surveys have shown that the public is aware of its abundant and renewable water and renewable electricity resources [10]–[12]. In addition, the public knows that its agricultural and timber resources are very important to Idaho's economy. People are generally satisfied with their Idaho lifestyle; however, there are concerns that the rapidly growing population may impact their current and future quality of life. Consequently, it is important to educate the public about the concept of sustainability and to determine the degree of satisfaction they have with the sustainability of everyday resources and human issues in the state.

The purpose of this study is to determine the perceptions of Idahoans on how the state is addressing sustainable development over a period of 33 years – between 1990 and 2023. The study explored public views on 11 different issues related to sustainability in Idaho. These 11 sustainability issues include: (1) quality of life, (2) population growth, (3) development, (4) community planning, (5) transportation systems, (6) recreational opportunities, (7) agriculture, (8) forest management, (9) electricity, (10) range management, and (11) water resources management.

2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

Surveys were used to determine the sustainability of 11 issues in Idaho in this study. The first survey measured the sustainability of practices over a 30-year period. The second survey allowed the public to develop sustainability indexes, while the third survey approached professionals with extensive knowledge of each sustainability issue to develop sustainability indexes.

In 1989, a survey instrument was developed to assess public opinions about the sustainability of 11 issues/practices in Idaho. The actual survey questions evaluated in this study were:

Survey question 1: Check the three most important issues/practices that should be sustainable in Idaho: (1) quality of life, (2) population growth, (3) development, (4) community planning, (5) transportation systems, (6) recreational opportunities, (7) agriculture, (8) forest management, (9) electricity, (10) range management, and (11) water resources management.



Survey question 2: For each of the issues listed in survey question 1, rate them in Idaho as being currently sustainable, unsustainable or no opinion.

These two survey questions in 1990, 2000, 2010 and 2020 were embedded in a survey instrument containing 30 questions that were sent to over 2,000 adult residents of Idaho. The survey target audience was a representative sample of the 700,000 in 1990 to 1,300,000 in 2020 adult residents of Idaho. The identical survey was developed as a repeated measures instrument and delivered to the public via the United States Postal Service using the Dillman survey methodology [13], [14]. A sufficient number of completed surveys was the goal to result in sampling error values of less than 4%–6% [15]. The survey process was also designed to receive a completed survey return rate of more than 50%. Survey addresses were obtained from a professional social sciences survey company (SSI, Norwich, CT). Four mailings (including reminders) were planned to obtain the expected return of 50% [13], [14]. The mailing strategy used in this repeated-measures study was identical in all four survey years and identical to all major surveys conducted in the region since 1988 [16]–[19]. The survey return rate achieved with mailings in 1990, 2000, 2010 and 2020 exceeded the target completion return rate of 50% as it took only four mailings to achieve the target completion return rate. In addition, the following demographic data was also collected: gender, age, formal education level, community size, length of time living in Idaho, and geographical location within the state (north, southwest, southcentral or southeast).

Survey answers were coded and entered into Microsoft Excel. Missing data were excluded from the analysis. The data were analyzed at two levels using SAS [15]. The first level of analysis generated frequencies, while the second level evaluated how the respondents' demography influenced their responses. Significance ($P < 0.05$) to demographic factors was tested using a chi-square distribution [13]–[15]. Since the response rates were similar in all survey years, data analysis procedures were identical for each sampling.

A second survey instrument was developed in 2021 and conducted in 2022 that asked the public to rate sustainability of the 11 issues contained in the 1990–2020 surveys. Here, Idahoans were asked to rate the sustainability of each surveyed issue on a scale of 0 to 100. A low score (close to 0) meant that Idaho was far from sustainable, while a high score (close to 100) indicated that Idaho was well on its way to being sustainable on the given issue. A score near 50 meant that the state was doing a fair job with sustainability for the listed issue. The actual survey question evaluated in this study was:

Survey question 3: For each of the issues in Idaho, rate the current degree of sustainability on a scale of 0 to 100: (1) quality of life, (2) population growth, (3) development, (4) community planning, (5) transportation systems, (6) recreational opportunities, (7) agriculture, (8) forest management, (9) electricity, (10) range management, and (11) water resources management.

In 2022 this survey question was embedded into a 50 question survey that was sent to more than 1,600 adult residents in Idaho. The actual survey process and analysis including demographic questions, was identical to the surveys conducted in 1990, 2000, 2010 and 2020.

A third survey instrument was developed in 2022 and conducted in 2023 that asked professionals to rate the current sustainability of one or more of the 11 specific issues they had familiarity with. More than 50 professionals with at least a Master of Science degree or 12 years of experience working on topics of interest, completed this survey. The survey question was:



Survey question 4: Please rate the current degree of sustainability in Idaho for one of the 11 following sustainability issues listed here on a scale of 0 to 100.

In 2023, survey question 4 was embedded into an 18 question survey that was sent to over 1,000 professionals in Idaho. The actual survey process was identical to other surveys conducted in this paper for this study. However, means (averages) were used instead of statistics and demographic information was not collected.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The survey was designed to compare responses over time for the sustainability-related issues, so that useful information about trends could be developed. The mail-based Dillman survey methodology received response rates of 51.6%, 52.6%, 51.8%, 53.4% and 50.9% for the surveys conducted in 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020 and 2022, respectively. The goal of a greater than 50% response rate was achieved for all surveys sent to Idaho residents, resulting in a sampling error of less than 6%.

When the surveys were first initiated in 1990, the population of Idaho was 1,011,000; however, by 2022 Idaho's population had grown to 1,964,000. This 94% increase in population resulted in Idahoans becoming more urban, more concentrated in communities with more than 100,000 people and a higher percentage of people exposed to college.

There were many instances where the factors of gender, age, formal education level, community size, length of time living in Idaho and geographical location of people within the state impacted the responses of survey participants.

3.1 Sustainability issues over time

Idahoans were asked to select the three most important issues out of a list of 11 sustainability issues in 1990, 2000, 2010 and 2020 (Table 1). The survey results show four important findings. First, water resource management and electricity were consistently ranked as being in the top two of three issues selected by Idahoans. Second, the importance of agriculture, forest management, and range management decreased over time. Third, the importance of population growth and electricity (renewable) increased over time. Fourth, Idahoans did not see a change in the importance of community planning, development, quality of life, recreational opportunities and water resource management between 1990 and 2020.

Evaluation of survey responses shown in Table 1 suggested that water resource management, renewable electricity and population growth were the most common issues of interest to Idahoans. Consequently, these three items are further evaluated from a sustainability standpoint.

In 1990 a majority of Idahoans considered population growth sustainable; however, by 2020 a majority of survey respondents thought that population growth was unsustainable (Table 2). This response was most likely related to fast population growth observed in parts of Idaho during this 20-year survey period.

Sustainability trends for electricity (renewable) did not change between 1990 and 2020 (Table 2). Even though increasing or decreasing trends were not apparent it is important to note that over two-thirds of survey respondents thought that renewable electricity was sustainable in every survey year. Conversely, only 20% of the public felt that renewable electricity was not sustainable in 1990, but this number decreased to 12% by 2020.

When the no opinion responses were omitted a majority of Idahoans thought that water resources management was sustainable throughout the survey process (Table 2). This sustainability response declined from 60% on 1990 to 48% in 2020. However, less than one-



Table 1: Public views of the three most important issues in Idaho between 1990 and 2020. Note that each column should add to 300% because respondents were asked to choose three items; however, column totals were less than 300% because not all respondents selected three items.

Issue	1990 (%)	2000 (%)	2010 (%)	2020 (%)	Significance
Agriculture	20	16	11	6	***
Community planning	16	18	15	20	NS
Development	31	29	31	26	NS
Forest management	8	6	5	3	**
Population growth	16	24	28	34	****
Quality of life	24	29	26	28	NS
Range management	6	4	3	1	**
Recreational opportunities	26	29	33	28	NS
Renewable electricity	36	39	41	45	***
Transportation systems	6	10	13	18	***
Water resource management	62	68	61	63	NS

NS = not significant; **, *** and **** = significant at the 95%, 99% and 99.9% level of probability, respectively.

Table 2: Public views of Idahoans on the sustainability of population growth management, renewable electricity and water resources management over a 30-year period from 1990 to 2020.

Sustainable or not	1990 (%)	2000 (%)	2010 (%)	2020 (%)	Significance
Population growth management					
Sustainable	60	55	48	37	****
Unsustainable	21	34	40	52	****
No opinion	16	14	12	11	NS
Renewable electricity					
Sustainable	67	70	70	69	NS
Unsustainable	20	18	16	12	**
No opinion	13	12	14	19	NS
Water resources management					
Sustainable	60	54	52	48	****
Unsustainable	23	26	28	30	**
No opinion	17	20	20	22	NS

NS = not significant; **, *** and **** = significant at the 95%, 99% and 99.9% level of probability, respectively.

third of survey respondents felt that current water resource management was unsustainable. This increase in 'unsustainable answers' over time may be related to the large influx of people into the state that were ignorant of the Idaho's water resources and the existing water distribution network in the state.



3.2 Demographic factors affecting sustainability

The demographic factors of gender, age, education level, length of residence in Idaho and geography impacted survey respondents' choice about the sustainability of population growth in 2020 (Table 3). First, females were almost twice as likely to as males to consider population growth sustainable. Second, younger adults were more likely to consider population growth sustainable than older adults. Third, residents with exposure to college were more likely to consider population growth not sustainable than less-educated Idahoans. Fourth, Idaho natives strongly considered population growth not sustainable, while 42% of respondents that had lived in Idaho less than 5 years considered population growth sustainable. Fifth, residents living in southwest Idaho were more likely (37%) to consider population growth sustainable than residents living in northern Idaho (28%), south-central Idaho (30%) and southeastern Idaho (31%). This may be related to the fact that over half the growth in Idaho in the last 20 years has been in the southwestern part of the state.

Table 3: The influence the demographic factors of gender, age, education level, community size, length of residence in Idaho and Idaho geography on how public views on population growth in Idaho in 2020.

Parameter	Sustainable (%)	Not sustainable (%)	Significance
Gender			
Female	41	53	****
Male	25	70	
Age			
< 30 years	45	47	***
30–49	37	55	
50–69	27	65	
70+	23	79	
Education			
< High school	40	53	****
HS diploma	41	50	
Some college	30	63	
College degree	20	74	
Community size			
< 25,000	36	56	NS
25,000–100,000	30	60	
> 100,000	35	57	
Residence			
Native	21	74	****
5–15 years	32	59	
< 5 years	42	48	
Geography			
North Idaho	28	61	**
SW Idaho	37	54	
SC Idaho	30	62	
SE Idaho	31	62	

NS = not significant; **, *** and **** = significant at the 95%, 99% and 99.9% level of probability, respectively. SW=Southwest, SC= Southcentral, SE=Southeastern.



The demographic factors of gender, age, education level, community size, length of residence in Idaho and geography impacted respondents' choice about the water resources management in 2020 (Table 4). Males were almost twice as likely than females to consider water resources management in Idaho sustainable. Residents over 50 years old were more likely to consider water resources management sustainable than residents aged between 30 and 49. This may be a result of environmental education in schools that has highlighted controversial water use issues in the state over the last 20 years. Only 36% of residents with a college degree considered water resource management sustainable, while the majority of residents with less formal education considered water resource management sustainable. A majority of Idaho residents considered water resource management sustainable; however, residents from Idaho's smallest communities were most likely to rate water management as sustainable. Over 80% of native Idahoans considered water resource management sustainable; however, 71% of people residing in Idaho less than 5 years considered water management unsustainable. Over 60% of people residing in north, south-central and south-eastern Idaho considered water resource management sustainable; however, 48% of

Table 4: The influence the demographic factors of gender, age, education level, community size, length of residence in Idaho and Idaho geography on how public views the sustainability of water resource management in Idaho in 2020.

Parameter	Sustainable (%)	Not sustainable (%)	Significance
Gender			
Female	34	38	****
Male	65	27	
Age			
< 30 years	46	48	****
30–49	53	43	
50–69	64	27	
70+	78	15	
Education			
< High school	76	16	****
HS diploma	70	24	
Some college	58	34	
College degree	36	58	
Community size			
< 25,000	78	15	****
25,000–100,000	6	38	
> 100,000	46	47	
Residence			
Native	81	13	***
5–15 years	74	23	
< 5 years	22	71	
Geography			
North Idaho	72	21	**
SW Idaho	41	48	
SC Idaho	60	32	
SE Idaho	67	25	

, * and **** = significant at the 95%, 99% and 99.9% level of probability, respectively. SW = Southwest, SC = Southcentral, SE = Southeastern.



southwestern Idaho residents considered water resource management unsustainable. The wide discrepancy in water resource views between Idaho natives and newcomers is likely due to the states of origin of newcomers. A large percentage of Idaho newcomers are from California and Utah. Both states are relatively dry and have limited water resources. Many of these newcomers also see Idaho as a dry state and are more likely think that Idaho water resources are not wisely used.

The demographic factors of age, education level, length of residence in Idaho and geography impacted respondents' choice about electricity (renewable) in 2020 (Table 5). It should be noted that electricity (renewable energy) received the highest percentage of sustainable responses by Idahoans. When Idahoans think about electricity they think about hydroelectric power, wind turbines (wind farms), solar panels on roofs (solar energy) and geothermal energy (a portion of downtown Boise is heated with geothermal hot water). Natural gas produces only a small percentage of Idaho's electricity, while there are no coal burning power plants in the state. The public is well-aware of renewable energy and strongly

Table 5: The influence the demographic factors of gender, age, education level, community size, length of residence in Idaho and Idaho geography on how public views the sustainability of renewable electricity in Idaho in 2020.

Parameter	Sustainable (%)	Not sustainable (%)	Significance
Gender			
Female	68	25	NS
Male	65	27	
Age			
< 30 years	76	15	****
30–49	71	23	
50–69	56	36	
70+	61	32	
Education			
< High school	59	35	****
HS diploma	62	31	
Some college	67	24	
College degree	73	19	
Community size			
< 25,000	67	24	NS
25,000–100,000	65	28	
> 100,000	65	77	
Residence			
Native	82	11	***
5–15 years	70	23	
< 5 years	47	42	
Geography			
North Idaho	70	23	**
SW Idaho	60	32	
SC Idaho	64	27	
SE Idaho	66	25	

, * and **** = significant at the 95%, 99% and 99.9% level of probability, respectively. SW = Southwest, SC = Southcentral, SE = Southeastern.



support continuing to make renewable a larger share of Idaho's electricity production. Currently, almost 75% of Idaho's electricity is classified as renewable.

Younger adults (aged 30–49) were more likely than older adults (aged 50+) to consider renewable energy in Idaho sustainable. Education also affected the sustainable response to renewable electricity. The higher the formal education level – the more likely that renewable energy was rated as sustainable. Idaho natives and people that have resided in the state for at least 5 years are more likely to indicate that electricity production in Idaho is sustainable than newcomers (70%–82% vs. 47%). Northern Idahoans were more likely to rate renewable energy as sustainable than residents of south-western Idaho.

3.3 Public sustainability index values

The public was asked to provide a sustainability index value for 11 sustainability issues. The public provided a sustainability index score for each of the 11 issues on a scale of 0 to 100. A value of 100 represented complete sustainability, while a value of 0 represented no sustainability. A sustainability index of 50 was in between sustainability and unsustainability. These sustainability index values are shown in Table 6. Electricity received that highest sustainability index of 81, while with an index value of 34 population growth management received the lowest index score. As expected, based on the other surveys in this study, electricity, quality of life, recreational opportunities and water resources management all received sustainability index scores above 50. The public sustainability index scores appear to be logical to people with knowledge about Idaho.

Table 6: The sustainability index of 11 issues in Idaho based on public perceptions in 2022 and professional perceptions in 2023 based on surveys of 2,000 members of the general public and 50 professionals with expertise in each of the 11 sustainability issues.

Sustainability issue	Sustainability index (0–100) ^a	
	Public perception	Professional perception
Renewable electricity	81	89
Quality of life	74	80
Recreational opportunities	71	64
Water resources management	55	69
Forest management	52	65
Agriculture	45	60
Transportation	43	16
Development	42	38
Range management	40	38
Community planning	39	31
Population growth management	34	37

^aValues within a row that are less than 12 index points apart are likely to be similar.

The demographic factor of length of residence in Idaho significantly impacted sustainability index scores. When the public was divided into three groups: native Idahoans, Idaho residents for 5 to 15 years, and Idaho residents for less than 5 years differences in answers were observed. In Table 7 Idaho natives (residents longer than 15 years) and newcomers (residents for less than 5 years) are compared. On nine of the 11 sustainability issues these two groups had different answers. The two groups only agreed on recreational

opportunities and range management. Native Idahoans provided higher index scores than newcomers for renewable electricity (90% vs. 59%), water resource management (72% vs. 34%), agriculture (59% vs. 37%), forest management (56% vs. 49%), and transportation (50% vs. 37%). Newcomers were more like to provide higher sustainability index scores than natives for quality of life (76% vs. 68%), development (46% vs. 38%), community planning (43% vs. 36%), and population growth management (48% vs. 16%).

Table 7: The influence of length of residency in Idaho on the sustainability index of 11 issues in Idaho based on public perceptions in 2022. Natives Idahoans are considered residents that have lived in Idaho for all their lives or at least 25 years, while newcomers have lived in Idaho 5 years or less.

Sustainability issue	Sustainability index (0–100)		
	Native Idahoans	Newcomers	Significance
Renewable electricity	90	59	****
Recreational opportunities	73	70	NS
Quality of life	68	76	***
Water resources management	72	34	****
Agriculture	59	37	****
Forest management	56	49	**
Transportation	50	37	***
Range management	42	44	NS
Development	38	46	***
Community planning	36	43	**
Population growth management	16	48	****

NS = not significant; **, *** and **** = significant at the 95%, 99% and 99.9% level of probability, respectively.

While the public sustainability index values are rather unscientific, they do provide a baseline of how people think about issues in Idaho. They also provide information on how the public feels about proactiveness to these issues by local, state, and the national government. For example, if we look at transportation, the typical Idahoan thinks about the quality of roads in the state. If a person felt that the roads were in good maintenance and good repair, they probably provided a higher index value. However, if a person were a newcomer to Idaho and lived in an urban area – they would probably think about both roads and public transportation. If such person was disappointed in the public transportation system, he/she would have probably given transportation a much lower sustainability index value.

3.4 Public vs. professional sustainability index values

A minimum of 50 professionals that worked in each of the 11 sustainability issues of concern were asked to provide a sustainability index for the practice assigned to them. Again, the professional sustainability index was a value from 0 to 100. The sustainability index value average for each of the 11 issues is shown in Table 7. The public and professional perceptions cannot be compared statistically to each other; however, the raw numbers give a sense of how close the lay public and professionals with expertise in specific areas compare. First, by comparing the three sustainability issues most discussed in this paper – population growth, renewable electricity and water resources management we get a feel for the awareness of the Idaho public. The sustainable index values were 81 for the public and 89 for the professionals. Both the public and professionals gave the highest sustainability values for renewable



electricity. The public and professionals are optimistic about the current and future state of renewable energy in Idaho and are in sync from a sustainability standpoint.

Both public and professionals provided high sustainability index values for quality of life (74 and 80) and recreational opportunities (71 and 64). Professionals provided a higher sustainability index for water resources management than the public (69 vs. 55). High agreement between the public and professionals indicates that, in general, both lay people and Idaho professionals have sustainability index values above 50 for the first five issues. Forest management and agriculture are issues that professionals see as being more sustainable than the public.

The most startling difference in sustainability index is in transportation where the public provided a fair, but much higher sustainability index than professionals (43 vs. 16). The public is more concerned about their quality of roads which has improved significantly in the last 20 years – but is far behind the neighbouring states on the Pacific coast. The professionals see that the state is lagging in terms of road construction and has a very small public transportation network.

The public and professionals rated population growth as having a low and similar sustainable index (34 vs. 37). When this comparison between the public and professionals was developed it was postulated that a difference of less than 10 index points would mean that the public and professionals had similar views on the sustainability of an issue. Conversely, if index values varied by more than 25 points the public and professionals had divergent views on the sustainability of a particular issue. Based on this information professionals and the public had similar views of the sustainability of electricity, quality of life, recreational opportunities, development, range management, community planning and population growth management. On the other hand, the public and professionals had contrasting views on the sustainability of transportation. Based on this comparison, public and professional sustainable index values were relatively similar for issues of importance in Idaho.

4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This survey study was important because it identified issues that the Idaho public thought were being addressed in both a sustainable and unsustainable manner over a 30-year period. In addition, a sustainability index was developed and used by the public and professionals to rate how the 11 issues were being handled from a sustainability standpoint. The key findings of this study were:

- Idahoans consistently ranked water resource management and electricity as the most important issues. In addition, the public appeared to be knowledgeable about these issues and felt that they were being addressed sustainably.
- The importance of electricity and population growth increased between 1990 and 2020; however, the importance of agriculture, forest management and range management decreased over time. The survey results show that the importance of quality of life, community planning, development, recreational opportunities, transportation, and water resources management did not change.
- By 2020, 69%, 48% and 37% of Idahoans considered electricity, water resources management and population growth sustainable; however, 52% of Idahoan considered population growth unsustainable.
- The demographic factors of gender, age, education level, community size, length of residence in Idaho and geography impacted survey respondent choices and often



impacted how respondents answered questions about sustainability in 2020. The number of years of living in Idaho appeared to be the most significant demographic factor.

- On a scale from 0 to 100 Idahoans provided sustainability index values of 81, 74, 71, 55, 52, 45, 43, 42, 40, 39 and 34 to electricity, quality of life, recreational opportunities, water resources management, forest management, agriculture, transportation, development, range management, community planning and population growth management, respectively.
- When provided with a scale from 0 to 100 professionals in Idaho professionals provided sustainability index values of 89, 80, 69, 65, 64, 60, 38, 38, 37, 31 and 16 to electricity, quality of life, water resources management, forest management, recreational opportunities, agriculture, development, range management, population growth management, community planning and transportation, respectively.
- The public and professionals, more often than not, produced similar sustainability index scores for a majority of issues. Both groups gave their six highest sustainability index scores to six issues: electricity, quality of life, recreational opportunities, water resources management, forest management and agriculture. The largest difference was about transportation, where the public provided an index score of 43 and professionals provided their lowest sustainability score of 16.

This study is essential for several reasons. First, it provides baseline sustainability index scores for 11 issues both from the public and professionals in Idaho. Second, it provides critical information about the more important issues in Idaho. Third, it indicates the literacy of the public awareness of sustainability. Fourth, this data will allow researchers in the sciences to conduct more in-depth studies on sustainability in Idaho, the region and the USA.

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