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A REPORT TO  
CITY OF TORONTO



# City of Toronto Fireworks Regulations Study

Qualitative and Quantitative Findings

March 10, 2022

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# 1

## ABOUT THE RESEARCH

## BACKGROUND

- Per the RFQ, the background of this project is as follows:
  - In Toronto, the use and sale of fireworks is regulated by the Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 466, Fireworks. Fireworks on private property may only be used without a permit on Victoria Day and Canada Day. The use of fireworks on private property on any other day of the year requires a permit from Toronto Fire Services (TFS), while sale of fireworks in Toronto requires a vendor permit to be issued by the City’s Municipal Licensing and Standards Division (MLS). Fireworks are banned in City of Toronto parks and on public beaches.
  - In response to an increase in unpermitted use of fireworks during the 2020 warm weather season, City staff launched an action plan in Spring 2021 to support compliant fireworks use and sale, as well as reduce nuisance impacts of unpermitted fireworks use. The action plan included a public education and outreach campaign (digital and print advertisements and updated messaging and information on the [City's fireworks website](#)), complemented by data-driven priority-based enforcement in the areas where the highest number of issues had occurred.
  - The City continued to receive a high-number of fireworks-related complaints in the 2021 warm weather season. In response, [Toronto City Council has directed](#) MLS and TFS to review the feasibility of restricting the retail sale of family fireworks to the public and restricting the use of family fireworks by the public.
  - Please note, most fireworks incidents and complaints in Toronto are related to the discharge of family fireworks (low-hazard, designed for recreational use) by members of the public. Use of fireworks designed for professional use, including display fireworks (high-hazard fireworks) and theatrical fireworks (high-hazard fireworks and special-purpose pyrotechnics used in the film and television industry) are not anticipated to be within the scope of this review.

## OBJECTIVES

- The overall purpose of the research is to better understand public perception and awareness of fireworks regulation in the City of Toronto to support a review of Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 466, Fireworks. Specific objectives are:
  - Provide an understanding of public perception and awareness among Toronto residents and their relationship to fireworks.
  - Develop a better understanding of the general public’s experiences, priorities, and concerns as it relates to the sale and use of fireworks by the public.
  - Determine next steps concerning potential restrictions, and how to modify (if necessary) restrictions currently in place.

## METHODOLOGY

- A total of n=1,000 respondents completed the survey online. Respondents were drawn from an online panel.
- The survey was undertaken from January 19<sup>th</sup>–25<sup>th</sup>, 2022.
- A sampling plan was developed to ensure a representative cross section of Toronto residents aged 18 years and older. The sample was representative of the general population by age, gender, socioeconomic status, and geographic area within the city, as well as other demographic variables. The final data was also weighted against the latest Statistics Canada 2021 Census to ensure that findings are representative of the total population of adult Toronto residents.
- To meet these objectives, a qualitative phase of this study was also integrated in the form of 3 online focus groups with a total of 21 participants. More specifically, the research included the following:
  - 1 group with Toronto residents who have bought and/or used family fireworks in Toronto
  - 1 group with Toronto residents who have watched family fireworks in Toronto
  - 1 group with Toronto residents who have heard family fireworks in Toronto
- Groups were 1 hour in length.
- Given the integrated nature of this report, various findings from the quantitative and qualitative phases of this project have been combined to illustrate the key findings.

# 2

## KEY FINDINGS

# Key Findings

## USE OF FIREWORKS IN CITY OF TORONTO NEIGHBOURHOODS

**A large majority of residents (70%) reported having heard fireworks in their community. A significant proportion (48%) of residents had heard fireworks in public parks, on roads, and on beaches. A similar proportion had noticed the use of fireworks on neighbours' private property.**

- Participants felt mostly positive regarding their experiences with fireworks, recalling having viewed fireworks set off in their local neighbourhood or park, as well as at professional fireworks displays.
- Among the negatives associated with fireworks, participants mostly focused on the noise disturbances that come with firework usage past appropriate hours, as well as related safety risks. Less frequently mentioned was the issue of leftover waste following fireworks being used.
- It was generally felt that so long as fireworks were used in a safe manner and within appropriate hours, issues regarding fireworks usage would significantly decrease in quantity and severity.

# Key Findings

## PURCHASE OF FIREWORKS IN THE CITY OF TORONTO

**Most City of Toronto residents (62%) had never purchased fireworks, while only 23% reported having done so. In addition, another 14% recalled a member of their household purchasing fireworks in the past.**

- A significant number (40%) of buyers purchased fireworks from stores such as gas stations, convenience stores, and big-box stores. Another popular channel were vendors selling fireworks from a tent or trailer in a parking lot (35%). The third most cited vendor (28%) were stores that sell only fireworks.
- Among the focus groups, concerns were frequently expressed about the sale of fireworks to underage youth. Participants felt these buyers were primarily responsible for behaviours such as setting off fireworks in public spaces and/or late at night.



# Key Findings

## AWARENESS OF CURRENT FIREWORKS REGULATIONS

**3 Most respondents were generally aware the City of Toronto regulates the use of fireworks by the public. It was also clear, however, that (in focus group discussions) participants did not have a detailed understanding of the nature of current regulations.**

- Most City residents reported being generally aware of where to access information regarding the City of Toronto's rules on fireworks.
- On an aided basis, just under half of respondents indicated awareness of how to find information on Toronto's rules regarding fireworks and find out where fireworks are permitted.
- About three-quarters were unaware of the process to obtain a permit for firework use or where to verify whether a specific fireworks vendor is licensed by the City of Toronto.
- Having been shown the City regulations of fireworks in focus groups, many felt current fireworks regulations were quite reasonable.
- Some, however, were surprised that fireworks are banned in public parks and on beaches and initially thought these areas would be safer. Others felt that other cultural holidays needed to be included. A few wondered why hours of use were not included in the current regulations.

Participants/respondents were shown the following list of the City of Toronto's fireworks rules:

- Fireworks are banned in City of Toronto parks and on beaches.
- Residents are not allowed to set off fireworks in a street, a parking lot or any private property that is not their own.
- Fireworks may be used on private property on Victoria Day and Canada Day without a permit only.
- To use fireworks on private property any other day of the year, residents must have a permit from Toronto Fire Services.
- Residents must be at least 18 years old to purchase fireworks.
- Members of the general public are not allowed to buy professional-grade fireworks.
- The sale of fireworks in Toronto requires a permit issued by the City's Municipal Licensing and Standards Division.
- Temporary vendors with a permit are only allowed to sell fireworks 7 days before Victoria Day and Canada Day. This includes places like convenience stores, gas stations, big-box stores, trailers in parking lots.
- Permanent vendors with a permit can sell fireworks year-round. These stores only sell fireworks.

# Key Findings

## 4 MAKING CHANGES TO THE FIREWORKS REGULATIONS

**Shown data about the increasing complaints of illegal fireworks use over the past two years, it was widely felt among focus group participants that the City faces a significant problem which requires action.**

- Participants were unsure as to which specific actions should be taken. Some felt that while the use of fireworks should be restricted further (40% of respondents, specifically), they were unsure what could practically be done.
- Respondents felt that regulations on the use and purchase of fireworks should be kept the same (48% and 47%, respectively).
  - Likewise, many participants advocated for *increased* enforcement of *existing* regulations, though others wondered whether this would work given the relative ease in setting off fireworks and then leaving the scene.
- Some felt that there should be tighter regulation at the point of sale to reduce underage purchasing of fireworks.
- Others felt that fireworks should be permitted on public parks, schools yards, or beaches as these were viewed as safer environments for this type of activity. Others felt that if this was allowed, people would not clean up any leftover waste from fireworks.

Participants/respondents were shown the following statement on the City of Toronto's fireworks rules:

In recent years, there has been an increase in illegal fireworks use and emergency incidents related to fireworks in Toronto, especially in parks and public spaces, and waterfront areas. There has been an increasing number of issues and complaints on this matter, including:

- In 2020, the City received 123 complaints related to fireworks use in parks as compared to 36 received in 2019.
- As of November 23, 2021, fireworks complaints continued to increase in 2021 with 304 complaints related to fireworks use in parks.
- Toronto Fire Services responded to 142 calls for service related to fireworks including 5 fires in 2021. In 2020, Toronto Fire Services responded to 176 calls for service related to fireworks including 4 fires.

# Key Findings

## PUBLIC REACTIONS TO POTENTIAL CHANGES TO FIREWORKS REGULATIONS

**The most popular proposed change to fireworks regulations related to increasing the training of fireworks vendors. In addition, many focus group participants also felt that fireworks buyers should also be required to have some degree of training prior to purchasing.**

- Participants were more varied in their opinions regarding other potential changes. These included:
  - The requirement to always obtain a permit to buy and use fireworks;
  - A prohibition on the use of fireworks in Toronto;
  - The use of fireworks on additional holidays, beyond Canada Day and Victoria Day;
  - Public not being able to buy fireworks at anytime; and
  - Not allowing City residents to use fireworks on Canada Day and Victoria Day.

# Key Findings

## 6 VIEWS ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

**There was broad support for ensuring that future fireworks regulations address the environmental impact that accompanies fireworks use.**

- Although more prominent among survey respondents, most reported at least some level of concern regarding the environmental impact of fireworks usage.
- Some felt concerned that users of fireworks do not properly clean up leftover waste after an event or holiday, and mentioned having previously come across leftover fireworks materials on the ground in local parks.
- It was commonly felt that the environmental impact of fireworks usage should be accounted for, and properly enforced if regulations are not adhered to.

# Key Findings

## PROMOTING PUBLIC AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

**At the root of the issue, most felt that the public should be made more aware of fireworks rules and regulations. Many believed that better education would be crucial towards accomplishing this.**

- Some assumed fireworks usage was permitted on beaches and/or in parks. After being shown a list of current rules and regulations on fireworks usage in the City of Toronto, many were surprised to discover this was not the case.
- It was felt by participants that the public needed to have greater awareness of the City of Toronto's fireworks rules and regulations as many were currently making incorrect assumptions as to what is permitted or not permitted.
- Also suggested was incorporating a wider variety of methods towards educating the public and vendors on these rules and restrictions.

# Key Findings

## ADDITION OF CULTURAL HOLIDAYS

**Views were divided regarding the incorporation of additional cultural holidays as designated fireworks days where permits are not required for fireworks (like Victoria Day and Canada Day).**

- Similar to the views expressed in the survey, participants were mixed in their opinions regarding adding more cultural holidays to the list of dates where permits for fireworks were not required. Those who felt more should be added were generally of the view that it was unfair that the only two holidays allowed at present are Canada Day and Victoria Day.
- Those who felt these cultural holidays should not be added believed that it should be kept to just Canada Day and Victoria Day to limit public safety risks and noise disturbances. Additionally, they recognized that fireworks can still be used on other holidays, with the only difference being the requirement of a permit.

# 3

## DETAILED FINDINGS

# AWARENESS OF AND EXPERIENCE WITH FIREWORKS



## HISTORY PURCHASING FIREWORKS

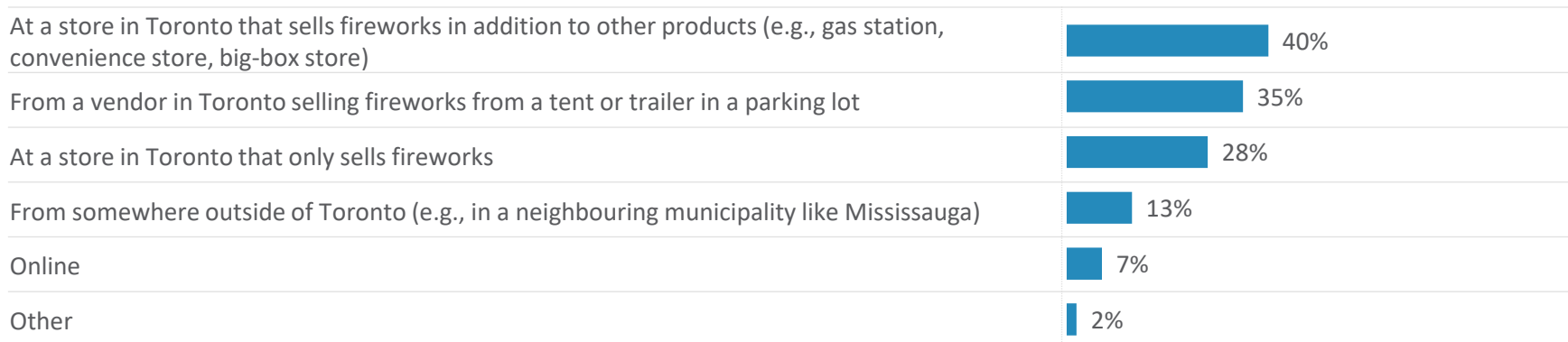
Most City residents have not purchased fireworks in the past five years. Those who did, however, indicated they purchased fireworks at a store that sells products beyond fireworks (40%), such as a gas station, convenience store, or big-box store.

- 35% reported purchasing fireworks from a vendor in Toronto situated in a tent or trailer in a parking lot.

### Purchased fireworks in the past five years



### Where purchased



- 38.6% of men have purchased fireworks, compared to 30.2% of women.
- 40.4% have in Scarborough, but less so in Etobicoke York (26.8%).
- 44.7% of those 18-34 have purchased fireworks.

- 39.6% of men purchased fireworks from a vendor in a tent or trailer, compared to 30.7% of women.
- 42.5% and 42.3% residing in North York and Scarborough, respectively, purchased fireworks from a vendor in a tent or trailer whereas 48.9% and 41.3% of those in Etobicoke York and Toronto/East York purchased fireworks at a store that sells other products.
- Those between 35-54 and 55+ are more likely (42% and 43.3%, respectively) to purchase from a vendor in a tent or trailer. Younger buyers aged 18-34 (44.4%) lean more toward stores that sell fireworks as well as other products.

Q1. Have you or someone in your household bought fireworks in the last five years?

Base: Total sample (n=1000)

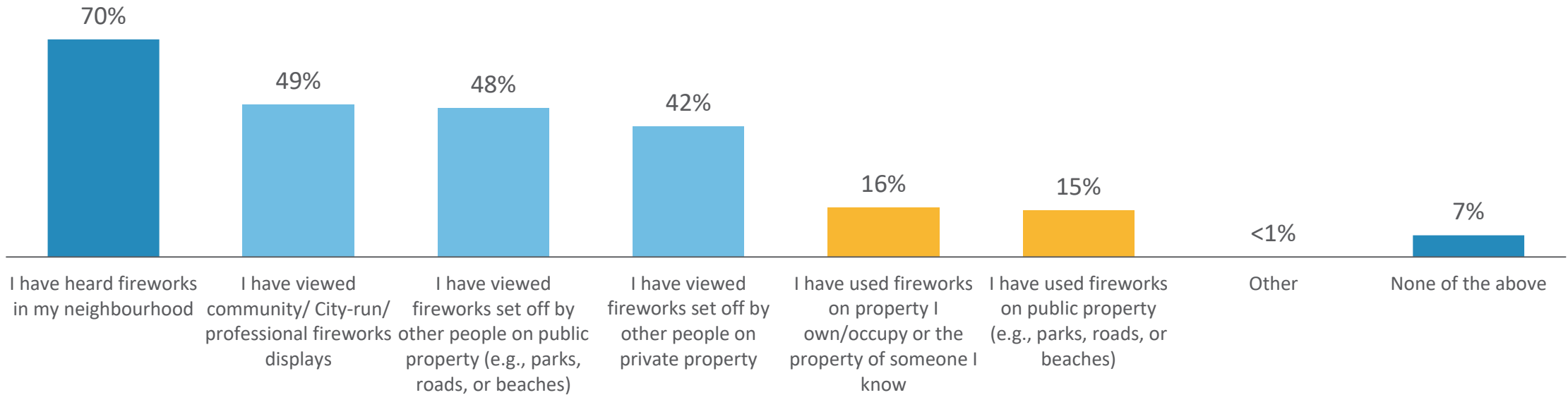
Q2. Where have you or someone in your household purchased fireworks in the last five years?

Base: Have purchased fireworks in past five years (n=341)

## EXPOSURE TO FIREWORKS

Most respondents had heard fireworks in their neighbourhood within the past five years, while approximately half had either viewed professional fireworks displays and/or fireworks set off by other people on public property.

- Just under half (42%) of respondents viewed fireworks set off by other people on private property.
- In contrast, few reported having used fireworks on property they own/occupy (or the property of someone they know) or used fireworks on public property (e.g., parks, roads, or beaches), at 16% and 15%, respectively.



Q3. Please share how you have experienced fireworks in Toronto in the last five years.

Base: Total sample (n=1000)

# Findings from the Focus Groups

## EXPERIENCE WITH FIREWORKS

**Generally, participant experiences with fireworks were positive and limited to only occurring a few days out of the year, particularly Victoria Day and Canada Day.**

- On balance, participants expressed positive feelings toward fireworks and enjoy watching them.
- Although most recalled having viewed fireworks on Victoria Day and Canada Day, some mentioned other celebratory events including New Year's, birthdays, the odd weekend, or other cultural holidays.
- Several others mentioned having viewed professional City-run fireworks. Also discussed was the option to view fireworks online as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- When participants discussed where they tend to see fireworks, some mentioned school yards, with others explaining that a paved lot seemed safer to them. Others reported that during the pandemic, they had seen people set off fireworks in-between apartment buildings.

“ *It just blows your mind how much effort, time, and money is spent on this and it just looks so beautiful in the sky. It can end the evening off wherever you go just right.* ”

# Findings from the Focus Groups

## PERCEIVED POSITIVES REGARDING FIREWORK USE

**Fireworks were primarily associated positively with a feeling of connectedness, and the perception that they bring neighbours and communities together.**

- Positively speaking, many shared the sentiment that watching fireworks serves to bring a community together, and that this was particularly true throughout the COVID-19 pandemic when Toronto residents were limited to their homes. There was a sense that these displays facilitate social connections among neighbours.
- Those living in apartment units noted that fireworks are a nice visual to have when living in this type of dwelling. This was particularly the case for those with kids who expressed that they enjoyed viewing them from their balcony as a family.
- Others appreciated fireworks as a source of entertainment and something to look forward to on various holidays.
- Less frequently stated was the view that launching fireworks educates youth on proper protocols for fireworks safety.

“ *The last couple years have been socially isolating. The opportunity to be outdoors and see neighbours I haven't seen in a while, seeing their kids growing up... there's a feeling of connectedness; definitely positive.* ”

# Findings from the Focus Groups

## PERCEIVED NEGATIVES OF FIREWORK USE

### **Frequently mentioned negatives regarding firework use were primarily related to noise disturbances and safety risks.**

- A popular complaint among participants was the late hour at which fireworks are typically set off. Some felt that the disturbing noise can potentially startle young children or family pets, causing unnecessary stress.
- Some also felt that depending on the neighbourhood and the crime rate for the area, the sound of fireworks can incite fear as some Toronto residents may mistake the sound for that of gunshots or other life-threatening activities.
- Others felt that younger Toronto residents, specifically underage and young adults, are using fireworks and setting them off at inappropriate hours without abiding by Toronto fireworks by-laws. They expressed concern that these residents may be more reckless with their behaviour and may be at risk of an accident.
- Few mentioned the price of fireworks as an additional negative factor associated with firework use.

“ If it’s a neighbourhood known for crime or has a high crime rate, it can incite fear in some respects. The noises can seem synonymous to gunshots in some respects.

# Findings from the Focus Groups

## FIREWORK USE AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

**When asked about causes of the increase in fireworks complaints, several felt that it was a side effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and increased time spent at home. However, many did not make the connection between the pandemic and increased use of fireworks.**

- Several felt that the increase in complaints was likely driven in part by the COVID-19 pandemic, with many forced to spend further time indoors and therefore more likely to hear fireworks.
- While others also believed that this increase in complaints was due to the pandemic, they felt it was actually the result of Toronto residents engaging in more outdoor gatherings and activities (such as fireworks use) as a response to being bored and restricted to their homes for extended periods of time.
- Others also acknowledged the pressure these increasing fireworks complaints put on emergency services (i.e., Toronto Fire Services, Toronto Police Service).

“ I’m sure the pandemic has influenced those numbers a lot, because a lot of people are probably bored at home looking for something to do. And then, on the flip side, people are home so they’re just noticing more things.

# Findings from the Focus Groups

## DISPOSAL OF FIREWORKS

**Unprompted, some raised the issue of proper fireworks disposal after having used them. Among some participants, leftover waste in parks and on beaches was a concern.**

- Following the review of the list of the City’s fireworks rules and regulations, some noted that it does not address the question of how to properly dispose of fireworks. Participants were generally unaware as to whether fireworks are safe to dispose of in typical garbage cans or if they require a specific type of disposal.
- Several indicated that the waste produced by fireworks was a concern regarding their use. When discussing fireworks use on beaches, some expressed that while beaches should be a permitted location, they remained concerned about the waste that would be left behind. As such, some suggested implementing certain measures to ensure fireworks users clean up after themselves.

“ I think there’s a little problem, because when I go to the park the next day, I see fireworks sitting on the ground. They don’t throw it away, it just becomes a little bit of a mess.

# AWARENESS OF FIREWORKS REGULATIONS

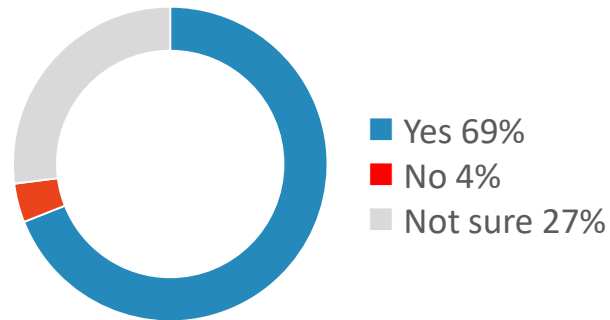


## AWARENESS OF FIREWORKS REGULATIONS

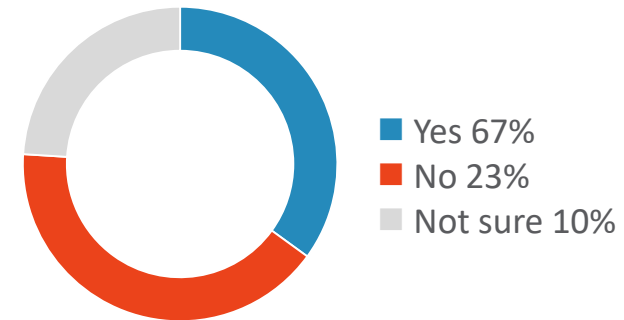
While most respondents were aware that the City of Toronto regulates the use of fireworks by the public, they were also generally aware of where to access information regarding the City of Toronto's rules on fireworks.

- On the other hand, 27% were not sure if the City regulates the use of fireworks, with 23% unaware of where to access information about the City's rules on the matter.

Are there regulations governing the use of fireworks by the public in the City of Toronto?



Do you know where to access information about the City of Toronto's rules on fireworks?



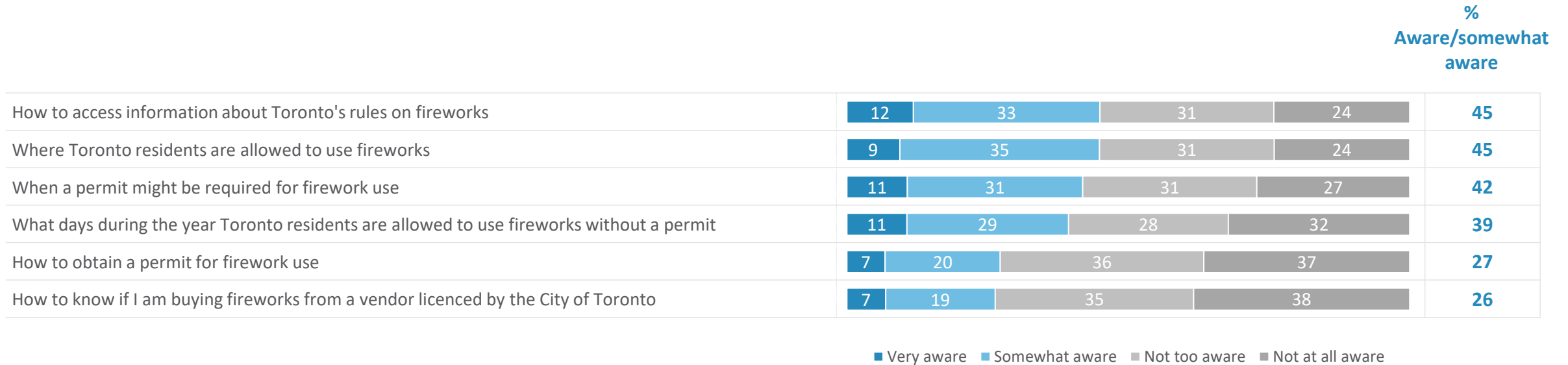
Q4. To the best of your knowledge, are there regulations governing the use of fireworks by the public in the City of Toronto?

Q5. Do you know where to access information about the City of Toronto's rules on fireworks?

Base: Total sample (n=1000)

## AWARENESS OF FIREWORKS REGULATIONS

While just under half of respondents were aware of how to access information on Toronto's rules regarding fireworks and where they are permitted, 73% were unaware of how to obtain a permit for firework use or verify whether a specific fireworks vendor is licensed by the City of Toronto.

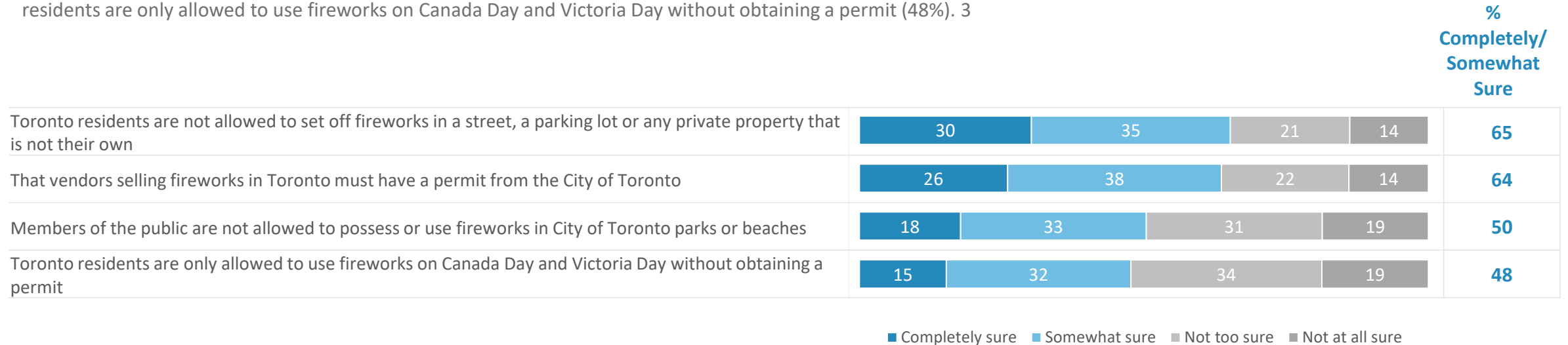


Q6. Please indicate your level of awareness of the following relating to fireworks.  
 Base: Total sample (n=1000)

## AWARENESS OF FIREWORKS REGULATIONS

Presented with four statements, the majority of respondents felt sure that Toronto residents are not allowed to set off fireworks in a street, parking lot, or other private property they do not own (65%), and that vendors selling fireworks in Toronto must have a permit from the City (64%).

- Respondent certainty was lower regarding whether members of the public are allowed to possess or use fireworks in City of Toronto parks or beaches (50%), or whether Toronto residents are only allowed to use fireworks on Canada Day and Victoria Day without obtaining a permit (48%). 3



Q7. There are in fact some regulations governing the use of fireworks in the City of Toronto. For the following please indicate your degree of certainty if each of the following is a regulation in the City.

Base: Total sample (n=1000)

## PERCEPTIONS ON MODIFYING FIREWORKS REGULATIONS

When asked if regulations on the use and purchase of fireworks should be increased, kept the same, or reduced, just under half (48% and 47%, respectively) of respondents felt that they should be kept the same.

- In addition, a significant portion of respondents were of the opinion that restrictions should be increased regarding how members of the public are allowed to use (40%) and purchase (42%) fireworks in Toronto.

### Background provided to respondents:

In recent years, there has been an increase in unpermitted fireworks use in Toronto. Toronto City Council has asked City staff to explore the feasibility of restricting the retail sale of fireworks to members of the public and restricting the use of fireworks by the public. Please rate your level of agreement/disagreement with the following statements. Note, the City is currently exploring a wide variety of options to more thoroughly assess the feasibility of restrictions.

#### Reminder of Toronto's current fireworks rules:

- Fireworks are banned in City parks and on beaches.
- Residents are not allowed to set off fireworks in a street, a parking lot or any private property that is not their own.
- Fireworks on private property may only be used without a permit on Victoria Day and Canada Day.
- To use fireworks on private property any other day of the year, residents must have a permit from Toronto Fire Services.
- The sale of fireworks in Toronto requires a permit issued by the City's Municipal Licensing and Standards Division.
- Residents must be at least 18 years old to purchase fireworks.
- Members of the general public are not permitted to buy professional-grade fireworks.

### Which option do you most agree with regarding regulating the use of fireworks?



- Increasing restrictions on how members of the public are allowed to use fireworks in Toronto
- Keeping the rules on public fireworks use the same
- Reducing restrictions on how members of the public are allowed to use fireworks in Toronto

### Which option do you most agree with regarding regulating the purchase of fireworks?



- Increasing restrictions on how members of the public are allowed to buy fireworks in Toronto
- Keeping the rules on how the public can buy fireworks the same
- Reducing restrictions on how members of the public are allowed to buy fireworks in Toronto

Q8. Which of the options below do you most agree with in terms of how the City deals with regulating the use of fireworks?

Q9. Which of the options below do you most agree with in terms of how the City deals with regulating the purchase of fireworks?

Base: Total sample (n=1000)

# Findings from the Focus Groups

## FIREWORKS AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

### **Unsurprisingly, most participants' awareness of fireworks rules and regulations was very limited.**

- The minimal awareness that participants did have on fireworks rules and regulations was that they are only permitted for use on specific holidays. Others guessed that there may be some regulation to limit the time of day that fireworks can be lit.
- Some also assumed fireworks were not permitted for use in indoor facilities, but were unaware of any specifics regarding these rules.
- Participants were mainly unaware of fireworks rules or by-laws, indicating they do not actively do any research on the subject. Those that live in apartment buildings explained that if they lived in a detached home, as opposed to an apartment, then they may be more likely to seek out relevant information on the rules.
- In the unique instances where participants did look into the City of Toronto fireworks by-laws, it was explained that they were only permitted twice a year, on Victoria Day and Canada Day, they could only be lit during certain hours, and must be lit on property owned by the user.

# Findings from the Focus Groups

## REACTIONS TO FIREWORKS RULES AND REGULATIONS

**Having reviewed a list of the City's fireworks rules, participants generally felt the rules were reasonable and sensible. However, several were surprised that fireworks are banned on City beaches and initially thought it would be a safe area.**

- Generally speaking, participants found the list of fireworks rules and regulations to be logical and intuitive. There was a sense that these rules would be effective in mitigating the risk of future incidents if enforced correctly.
- Participants generally found the requirement of a permit to be a positive to prevent excessive use of fireworks. They all agreed that this requirement imposes some degree of accountability on the buyer. Conversely, some noted that this requirement may be a nuisance for those who would like to purchase and use fireworks.
  - Some underscored that permits should be required on Victoria Day and Canada Day as well.
  - Several were unaware of the costs of obtaining a permit, as well as other details such as how long it would be valid for.
- Most participants agreed that the minimum age requirement of 18 was sufficient. That said, a small number felt that the minimum age should be higher due to the larger responsibility that comes with handling fireworks
- Others were surprised that fireworks are not permitted in parks and on beaches, with some remembering instances where they had personally seen people light fireworks in parks and on beaches.
- Some expressed that fireworks should not be sold at gas stations and felt this made them too readily available to the public.

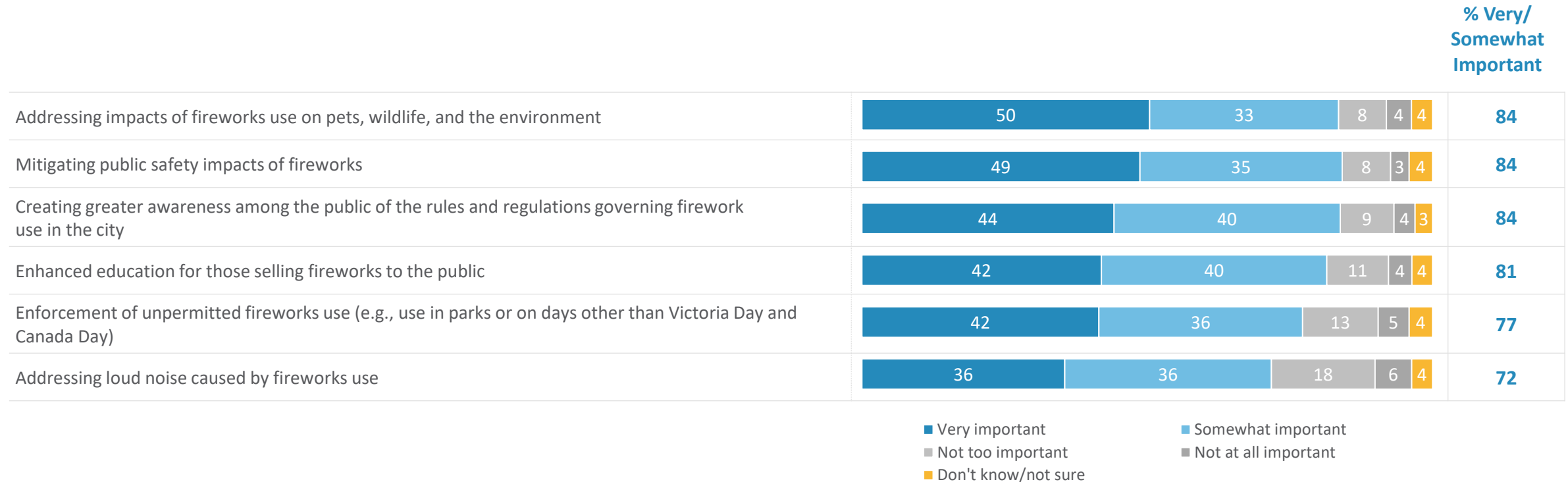
“ Maybe it shouldn't be sold in gas stations. That's just going to be an invitation for disaster.”

# MODIFYING FIREWORKS REGULATIONS

**PROPOSED ACTIONS BY THE CITY**

City residents place importance on dealing with the impacts of fireworks on pets, wildlife and the environment, public safety, education of the public and fireworks vendors, and enforcement.

- Only a resounding minority felt that these issues were not too important/not at all important. Although, across all options, the least (72%) agreed that addressing loud noise caused by fireworks use is very/somewhat important.



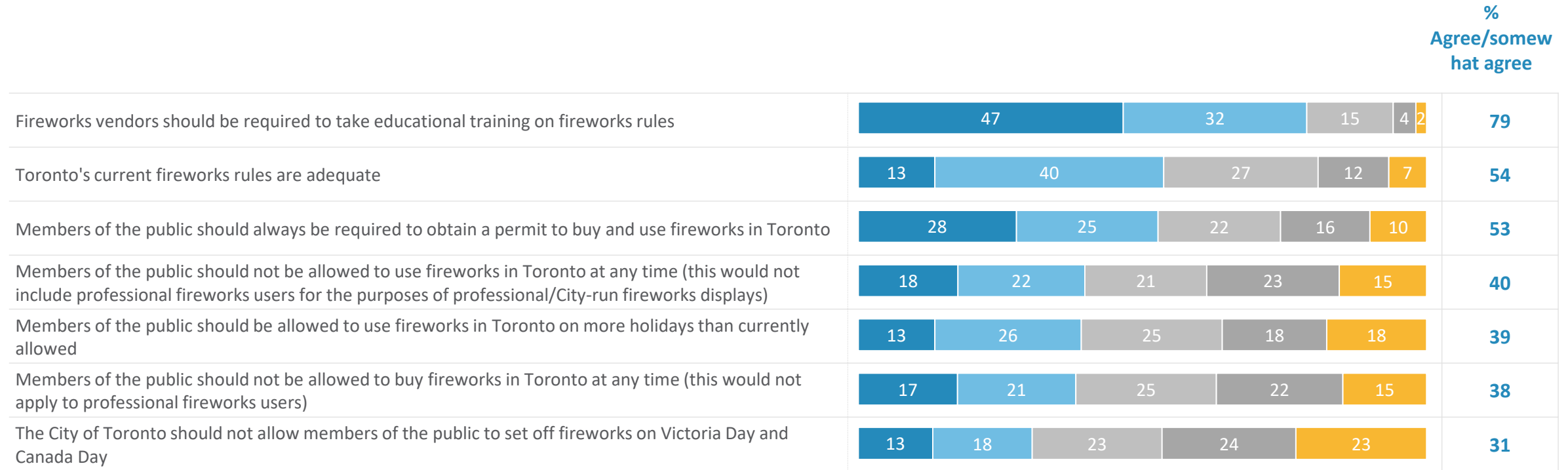
Q10. How important is it to you that the City addresses the following in relation to firework use in the City?  
 Base: Total sample (n=1000)



PERCEPTIONS OF FIREWORKS REGULATIONS

On balance, most respondents (79%) agreed that fireworks vendors should be required to take educational training on fireworks rules.

- Less so, just over half of respondents (54% and 53%, respectively) felt that Toronto’s current fireworks rules are adequate and that members of the public should always be required to obtain a permit for the purchase and use of fireworks in Toronto.



■ Strongly agree   
 ■ Somewhat agree   
 ■ Neither  
■ Somewhat disagree   
 ■ Strongly disagree

Q11. For the following please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each.  
 Base: Total sample (n=1000)

# Findings from the Focus Groups

## POTENTIAL CHANGES TO FIREWORKS REGULATIONS

**Although participants did not widely think restrictions should necessarily be made more restrictive, some felt that proper enforcement of fireworks regulations is critical to public safety.**

- Suggested changes and additions to fireworks regulations included the following:
  - Allocating public areas to fireworks use. Participants that suggested this idea compared it to gun ranges where people go to specifically use guns and felt the concept could be applied for fireworks usage. Participants largely felt that this would create community excitement and bring people together. Some even suggested the addition of food trucks. It was underscored that proper enforcement would be required to supervise such areas.
  - Including specific time frames or curfews when fireworks are permitted. Many felt that any later than 11:00pm is disruptive.
  - A small fee to pay toward a City fund that could supplement services related to fireworks misuse, clean up, and additional enforcement in response to violations.
  - Including the fine for violating City of Toronto by-laws to discourage future violations.
  - Including residents in apartment buildings. Specifically, participants in apartment units highlighted that, according to the rules, they would theoretically be permitted to use fireworks on their balconies for the sole reason that they own their property.
- Despite the rise in fireworks complaints, a few felt that not much more than enforcing current by-laws and responding to calls could be done.

# Findings from the Focus Groups

## ADDING CULTURAL HOLIDAYS

### **Views on adding additional holidays to be exempted from obtaining a permit were generally mixed.**

- On one hand, some felt that limiting the holidays where residents do not need permits to Victoria Day and Canada Day is unfair as Toronto residents come from such diverse backgrounds. Some were surprised that other cultural holidays such as New Year, Lunar New Year and Diwali were not included on the list.
- In contrast, others explained that removing the requirement for one additional cultural holiday would mean that they would need to remove the requirement for all cultural holidays to be inclusive.
  - In the same way, participants felt that if the City implemented this for enough cultural holidays, then there may a risk of increasing fireworks complaints as fireworks would occur more often.
  - Participants generally thought that limiting the holidays that do not require permits to Victoria Day and Canada Day is likely an effective and unbiased approach, considering the number of nationalities in Canada.

# ENFORCEMENT OF FIRWORKS REGULATIONS

# Findings from the Focus Groups

## THE ROLE OF ENFORCEMENT

### **Many found that adequate enforcement of the City's fireworks by-laws was critical for the safety of Toronto residents and went hand-in-hand with educating the public on fireworks safety.**

- Only a few felt that the sharp increase in fireworks complaints called for additional temporary enforcement; however, they underscored that it should not be long-term.
- On the other hand, some found the idea of increased enforcement to be unnecessary and believed other, more pressing issues should be top-of-mind for the City.
  - Participants added that the usage of fireworks is difficult to regulate, comparing it to policing underage drinking. In this way, participants explained that those violating fireworks by-laws would leave the area before any enforcement arrives. Similarly, if fireworks by-laws were further tightened, some felt that Toronto residents would travel to neighbouring municipalities to set off or see fireworks. In contrast, if they were loosened, they explained that more people would come to Toronto. As a result, they felt that further education would be a more practical strategy.
- Suggested strategies for enforcing fireworks regulations included the following:
  - Limiting the quantity you can purchase at once.
  - Toughening up the fines for violations/increase patrolling of by-law enforcement officers/increase ticketing and fines.
  - Regulating the vendors of fireworks and incorporating more enforcement at the point of sale.
  - Ensuring that the buyer is 18 years of age or older by checking ID at the point of sale.
  - Having an enforcement officer on-site to ensure everything is safe and all by-laws are being followed.

“*It's a by-law without teeth. The police are too busy. We don't have the staff to enforce all these laws.*”

# IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

# Findings from the Focus Groups

## THE ROLE OF EDUCATION

### **Widely held was the view that education is key to ensuring Toronto residents follow fireworks by-laws.**

- Suggested strategies for educating the public on fireworks regulations included the following:
  - Including a reminder on the packaging of the fireworks or on water bill about fireworks rules and regulations. Similarly, some suggested sellers displaying fireworks rules (a short explanatory video, for example) so buyers see it at the point of sale.
  - Advertising about fire safety and handling fireworks specifically before key holidays (i.e., Victoria Day and Canada Day).
  - Requiring that buyers of fireworks complete a small course if they are getting their permit.
    - Several people thought this idea would be challenging to implement in practice.
  - Having a speaker go to schools in the City to discuss fireworks safety. This was compared to Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) as they found it to be effective when speaking to youth.

“ I would like to see some more educational directive or effort, whether it's through electronic means or you get your water bill and they include a little reminder in there about fireworks rules and regulations.

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## ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS



# About the Respondents



## GENDER

47%	Male
52%	Female
<1%	Transgender
<1%	Different gender identity
<1%	Prefer not to answer

## AGE

12%	18-24
19%	25-34
18%	35-44
19%	45-54
14%	55-64
18%	65+

## HOUSEHOLD INCOME

10%	\$0 - \$29,999
14%	\$30,000 - \$49,999
14%	\$50,000 - \$69,999
18%	\$70,000 - \$99,999
18%	\$100,000 - \$149,999
14%	\$150,000 or more
11%	Prefer not to say
1%	Don't know

## AREA OF RESIDENCE

13%	Etobicoke
23%	North York
44%	Toronto and East York (included downtown)
20%	Scarborough
<1%	Don't know/not sure

## LENGTH OF TIME LIVING IN TORONTO

2%	Less than 1 year
8%	1 to just under 5 years
20%	5 to just under 20 years
70%	20 years or more

## BORN IN CANADA

65%	Yes
33%	No
2%	Prefer not to say

## CURRENT HOUSING SITUATION

50%	Home owner
38%	Renting
10%	Permanently living with parent(s) or other family member(s)
<1%	Temporarily staying with others (no fixed address)
<1%	Homeless (staying outside, in a shelter, in a 24-hour respite)
<1%	Other (specify)
2%	Prefer not to say