

# Attachment 3: Research Survey: Consultants Report - Responsible Alcohol Use in City Parks



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A REPORT TO  
CITY OF TORONTO

## RESPONSIBLE ALCOHOL USE IN CITY PARKS

April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023

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# 1

## ABOUT THE RESEARCH

## OBJECTIVES

- The overall purpose of the research is understand attitudes towards allowing legal alcohol consumption in City of Toronto parks among Toronto residents, and to understand perceived risks, benefits, and conditions the public would expect to be imposed. Specific objectives are:
  - To provide an understanding of respondents’ support or opposition towards allowing alcohol consumption in City of Toronto parks;
  - To understand perceived benefits and risks of allowing drinking in parks;
  - To determine expectations of what limitations and regulations would be involved in allowing alcohol consumption in City parks; and
  - To assess current usage of City parks as well as potential changes in usage of City parks in light of allowing alcohol consumption.

## METHODOLOGY



A total of n=800 respondents completed the survey online. Respondents were drawn from an online panel. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of n=800 would carry a margin of error of +/- 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.



The survey was undertaken between January 9<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup>, 2023.



A sampling plan was developed to ensure a representative cross section of Torontonians by age, region and gender, reflective of the most recent Statistics Canada data. The data was weighted by region back to the 2016 Census.

	2016 Census	2023 Unweighted Sample*	2023 Weighted Sample**
Region	%	n	n
Old Toronto/East York	31.7	329	254
Etobicoke/York	21.6	107	173
North York	23.6	205	189
Scarborough	23.1	159	185

\*Interviews conducted across the City of Toronto by community.

\*\*Weighted sample used in the reporting of findings.

## Note to Reader – Statistical Testing

- Due to sample size, survey findings are not representative of immigrants, racial groups, etc. Additionally, sample sizes do not permit detailed examination of differences between suburban districts (e.g., Etobicoke, Scarborough).
- Throughout the detailed findings of this report, significance is shown at the 95<sup>th</sup> percent confidence level using up (↑) arrows.
  - Green arrows (↑) indicate findings within a sub-group are significantly above the total.
  - Grey arrows (↑) indicate findings that are significantly above their comparator group (e.g., significantly more male respondents than female respondents).

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## KEY FINDINGS

# Key Findings

1 Many Toronto residents (44%) support allowing the consumption of alcohol in City of Toronto parks. One-third (34%) of respondents expressed some degree of opposition. One-in-five (21%) are neutral on the issue.

2 Most of those who support allowing alcohol consumption in public parks do not have reservations or caveats attached to their support.

3 Concerns with allowing alcohol consumption in parks centre on public intoxication, disruptive behaviour and litter or soiling of public spaces.

4 Respondents are split on whether they would be likely to drink in parks, should they be allowed. For many, this change would not affect the frequency with which they visit City parks.

5 There is a clear expectation that should alcoholic drinks be allowed in City parks, the City of Toronto will maintain public health, communicate clearly and provide straightforward guidelines, and will ensure that parks are maintained and protected from damage.

6 Unsurprisingly, respondents who report personal alcohol consumption are more likely to support allowing alcohol consumption in City of Toronto parks.

# DETAILED FINDINGS

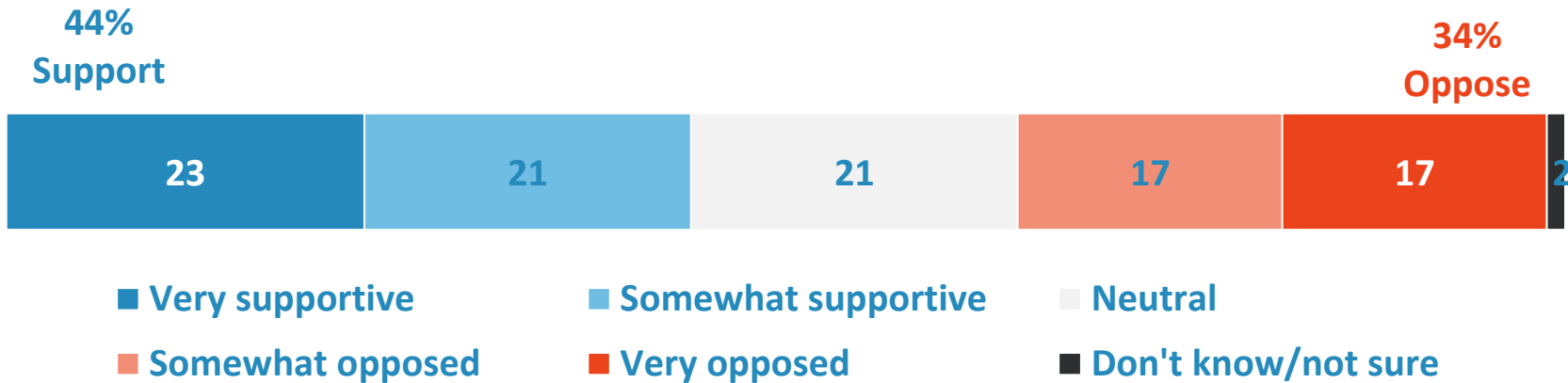


## SUPPORT FOR ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IN PARKS

More than four-in-ten (44%) Toronto residents supports allowing people to consume alcohol in parks. However, there is a core group of Torontonians - about one-in-five (17%) - who are 'very' opposed.

- 59% of respondents are soft on the issue both in their support and in their opposition.
- Torontonians who identify as White are more likely to be supportive than their racialized peers (55% net supportive versus 31%, respectively).

### Level of support for City of Toronto Allowing People to Responsibly Drink in Parks



#### More likely to be supportive:

- Residents of Toronto/East York: 57%↑.
- Men: 48%↑.
- Alcohol consumers: 52%↑.
- Respondents who identified as White: 55%↑.

#### More likely to be opposed:

- Respondents who identify as racialized: 38%↑.
- Non consumers of alcohol: 46%↑.
- Older residents aged 35-54 36%↑ and 55+ 39%↑ oppose.

## REASON FOR SUPPORT

Over six-in-ten (64%) Torontonians who support allowing alcohol consumption in parks say that they have no concerns. One-quarter (25%) express some reservations about allowing it.

- Two-fifths (41%) say that adults should be free to drink alcohol in the park if they so choose and that adults can be responsible for their conduct in parks.
- 15% of residents say that they support allowing alcohol consumption because it is already happening in parks.

### Reasons for Being **Supportive** of the Proposed Change

Adults can be responsible/Free to do what they want/should be able to enjoy the outdoors and have a drink	41%
Already happens and there are not issues/not a big deal	15%
Generally like the idea	13%
Needs to be done responsibly (proper enforcement, drink a reasonable amount)	10%
Not everyone has outdoor space	8%
Brings Toronto in line with other cities/countries	7%
Other	5%
Don't know/not sure/Not Stated	11%
<b>NET - SUPPORTIVE - Have no concerns</b>	<b>64%</b>
<b>NET - SUPPORTIVE - Have concerns</b>	<b>25%</b>

*Other includes: Other 4%, Park safety will decrease <1%, Depends on the park/Should be done at specific parks <1%, Generally dislike the idea <1%, Drinking and driving concerns <1%*

- Residents of Toronto/East York (19%↑) and those under 55 (18-34 - 18%↑, 35-54 - 19%↑) are more likely to say it already happens.
- Those living in Toronto/East York are more likely to voice no concerns (73%↑).

Q5a. OPEN END – Asked of those very/somewhat supportive at Q5. Why are you (RESPONSE FROM Q5) to this proposed change?

Base: Those who are supportive of the change (n=360)

Showing responses of 2% or greater.

**REASON FOR OPPOSITION**

Among those who are opposed to allowing drinking in City parks, more than half (56%) say they have reservations because of public drunkenness, violence, and general bad behaviour.

- Approximately one-quarter (23%) say that parks should be family focused, meaning that alcohol does not have a place in City parks.

**Reasons for Being **Opposed** to the Proposed Change**

<b>Public Drunkenness/Violence/Bad Behaviour</b>	<b>56%</b>
<b>Park should be focused on families (not exposing kids/young people to drinking)</b>	<b>23%</b>
Generally dislike the idea	7%
Concerned about litter	5%
Hard to monitor	4%
Park safety will decrease	3%
Drinking and driving concerns	3%
There are other places to drink	3%
Not everyone wants to be around alcohol	2%
Other	3%
Don't know/not sure/Not Stated	8%

*Other includes: Other 2%, Adults can be responsible/Free to do what they want <1%, Don't really care/Don't have a view on the issue <1%*

- Torontonians aged 55 or older are more concerned about public intoxication (70%↑), as are those living in Toronto/East York (67%↑).
- Respondents who identify as racialized are more likely to say that parks should be family-focused (28%↑).

Q5a. OPEN END – Asked of those very/somewhat opposed at Q5. Why are you (RESPONSE FROM Q5) to this proposed change?

Base: Those who are opposed to the change (n=262)

Showing responses of 2% or greater.

More than half (52%) of respondents say that allowing alcohol consumption in parks would provide new spaces to socialize and gather. Over one-quarter (29%) say there would be no benefit.

### Benefits of Allowing People to Responsibly Drink in Parks

Provides a new outdoor space to socialize and gather	52%
Provides an alternative to restaurants and bars for alcohol consumption	41%
Responds to public's current park use trends and requests	28%
Improves clarity on where people can drink alcohol	26%
Enhances the park experience	26%
Improves the sense of community	22%
Freedom/Make the city modern	1%
Resources can be focused on more important issues (police don't need to deal with drinking in parks)	1%
There are no benefits	29%
Don't know/not sure	5%

- Those living in Toronto/East York tend to cite 'provides a new outdoor space to socialize and gather' more often (59% ↑), as do those aged 18-35 (60% ↑) and 35-54 (53% ↑), and alcohol consumers (59% ↑).
- Those who consume alcohol are more likely to say it would respond to current trends (33% ↑) as would those who identify as White (36% ↑) and residents of Toronto/East York are much more likely than residents of other parts of the City (42% ↑).
- Those who drink alcohol are more likely to say it would provide more clarity (31% ↑) as would residents of Toronto/East York (34% ↑).
- Respondents who do not consume alcohol are much more likely to say that there are no benefits (46% ↑).
- People aged 55+ (43% ↑) are more likely to say that there are no benefits to allowing consumption than those aged 18-54.
- People living in Toronto/East York say it would improve the sense of community (30% ↑).

Q6. If the City allowed people to responsibly drink in parks, what would be the benefits? (Please check all that apply)

Base: Total sample n=800

## CONCERNS WITH ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IN PARKS

The top cited concerns with allowing alcohol consumption in parks are that this will result in disruptive behaviour (70%), increased litter (61%), public urination (60%), and underage drinking (59%). Half of respondents say that drinking and driving (53%) and excess noise (50%) are a concern.

- Across most metrics, non-drinkers are more likely to voice concerns.
- Across the seven most frequently cited concerns, women are more likely to report concern than men.

### Concerns for Allowing People to Responsibly Drink in Parks

<b>Disruptive behaviour</b>	<b>70%</b>
<b>Increased litter</b>	<b>61%</b>
Public urination	<b>60%</b>
Underage drinking	<b>59%</b>
Drinking and driving	<b>53%</b>
Excess noise	<b>50%</b>
Loss of alcohol-free space in parks	<b>28%</b>
Negative health effects of increased alcohol consumption	<b>26%</b>
Discrimination towards people drinking in parks who are Black, Indigenous, or are part of an equity-deserving group	<b>24%</b>
Gateway to worse behaviour	<b>1%</b>
Other	<b>1%</b>
I have no concerns	<b>5%</b>
Don't know/not sure	<b>2%</b>

- Across most metrics, older respondents, particularly those aged 55+ are more likely to voice concerns.
- Those over 55 are particularly concerned about disruptive behaviour (79% ↑) and underage drinking (73% ↑).

Q7. If the City allowed people to responsibly drink in parks, which of the following are concerns would you have? (Please check all that apply)

Base: Total sample n=800

## LIKELIHOOD TO CONSUME ALCOHOL IN PARKS

Among those who consume alcohol, results are split on whether they would consume alcohol in parks should it be allowed. Half (50%) say it would be unlikely, while 45% say that they would. More than one-quarter (27%) say that it is 'not at all likely' that they would drink in the park should it be permitted.

- There is little difference in perceived likelihood to consume alcohol in city parks by gender or ethnicity.

### Likelihood of Drinking in a Park if it was Allowed



#### Likely to Drink in a Park if Allowed:

- Respondents who live in Toronto/East York: 53%↑
- Younger Torontonians aged 18-34 58%↑ and 35-54 47%↑.

#### Not Likely to Drink in a Park if Allowed:

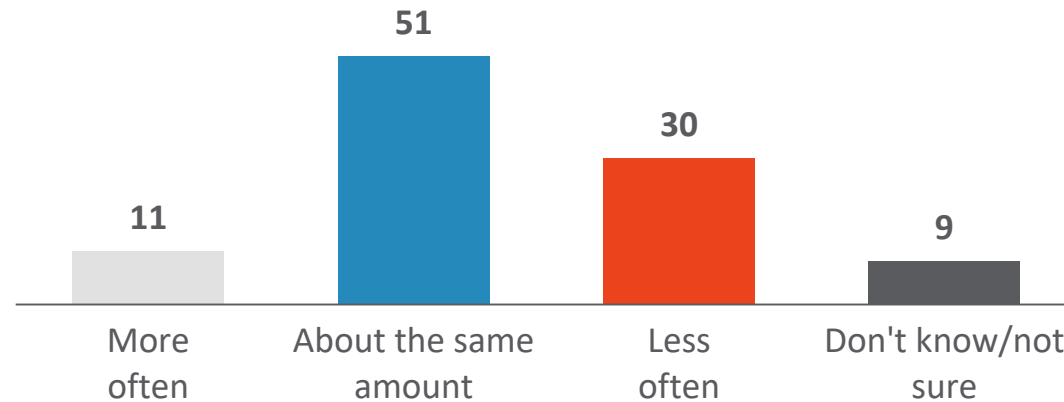
- Respondents aged 55+ 65%↑.

## CHANGE IN WILLINGNESS TO VISIT PARKS

Three-in-ten (30%) respondents say they would visit City parks less often should alcohol consumption be allowed there. Half (51%) say that their frequency of visiting parks would not change.

### If allowed, would it change how often you visit parks?

*I would visit parks ...*



#### No change in visiting:

- White-identifying respondents: 56%↑.

#### Will visit less often:

- Non-consumers of alcohol: 45%↑.
- Respondents who identify as racialized: 39%↑.

Q9. If the City allowed people to responsibly drink in parks (including the park that you visit the most), would this change how often you visit parks?

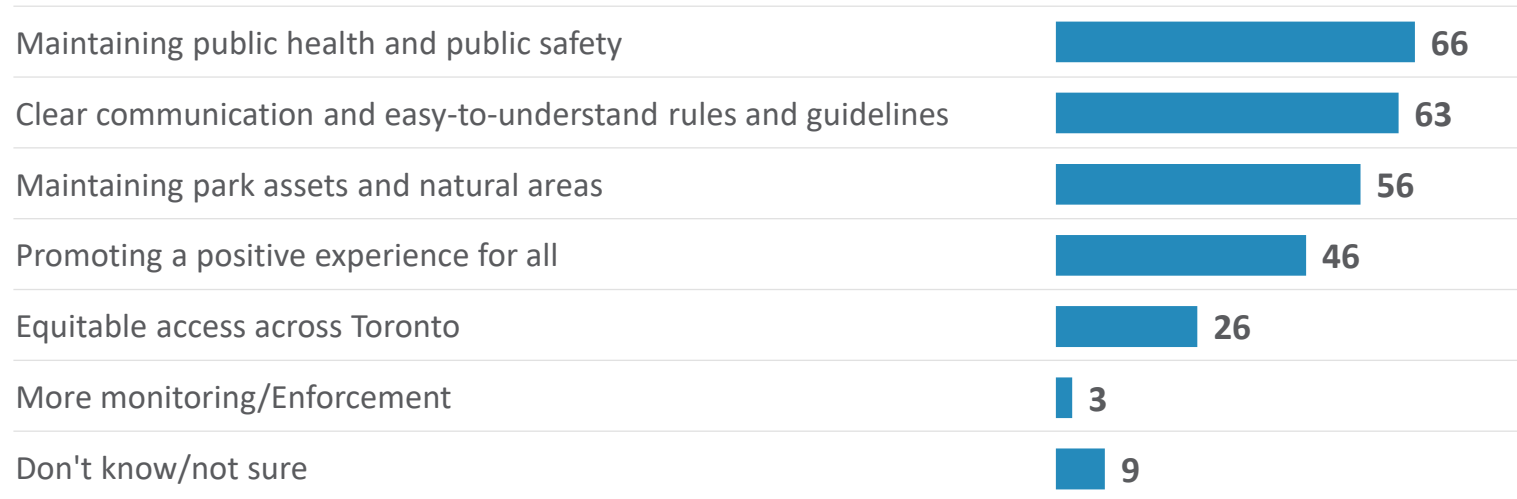
Base: Visits a park in Toronto (n=771)

## CAVEATS FOR ALLOWING ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IN PARKS

For two-thirds of respondents, maintaining public health and safety (66%) is an important condition for allowing alcohol consumption in parks. Clear communication and guidelines (63%) are given nearly equal importance.

- More than half (56%) of respondents say that maintaining park assets and natural areas is an important condition.

### Important Conditions if City Allowed People to Responsibly Drink in Parks



*Other mentions of 1% or less include: More monitoring/Enforcement; Washrooms; Less police/enforcement/police know what the law is; Designated Drinking/non-drinking zones; Plenty of garbage; Limited time of the day when people can drink; Limits on what/quantity people can drink; None/Nothing*

- White-identifying respondents more frequently cited maintaining natural areas (62%↑), as did Toronto/East York residents (61%↑).
- Equitable access was often cited by those aged 18-34 (32%↑) and by those living in Toronto/East York (31%↑).



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## ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

# Weighted Demographics

## GENDER

52%	Woman
47%	Man
1%	NET – Other
<1%	Prefer not to answer

## AGE

31%	18-34
37%	35-54
32%	55+

## PART OF CITY OF TORONTO LIVE IN

22%	Etobicoke York
24%	North York
32%	Toronto and East York (includes downtown)
23%	Scarborough

## TYPE OF HOUSING

36%	Single-family detached
16%	Single-family semi-detached, townhome, or row house
1%	Duplex, triplex, or rooming house
45%	Apartment or condominium
1%	Other

## HAVE OUTDOOR SPACE AT HOME FOR ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

86%	Yes
13%	No
1%	Not sure

## HOUSEHOLD INCOME

23%	NET - <\$50K
10%	\$0 - \$29,999
13%	\$30,000 - \$49,999
31%	NET - \$50K-<\$100K
14%	\$50,000 - \$69,999
17%	\$70,000 - \$99,999
33%	NET - \$100K+
16%	\$100,000 - 149,999
16%	\$150,000 or more
11%	Prefer not to answer
1%	Don't know

## BORN IN CANADA

66%	Born in Canada
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## LENGTH OF TIME LIVING IN CANADA (Not born in Canada n=258)

18%	0-5 years
13%	6-10 years
69%	More than 10 years
<1%	Prefer not to answer

## CHILDREN UNDER AGE 18 LIVING IN HH

73%	0
15%	1
8%	2
3%	3+
1%	Prefer not to answer

## ETHNIO-RACIAL IDENTITY

3%	Arab, Middle Eastern or West Asian
7%	Black
16%	East Asian
1%	First Nations
2%	Latin American
12%	South Asian or Indo-Caribbean
4%	Southeast Asian
56%	White
1%	Canadian
<1%	Mixed
<1%	Jewish
<1%	Other
4%	Prefer not to answer

## IDENTIFY AS INDIGENOUS TO CANADA

3%	Yes
95%	No
2%	Prefer not to answer

## PERSONALLY CONSUME ALCOHOL

74%	Yes
24%	No
1%	Prefer not to say

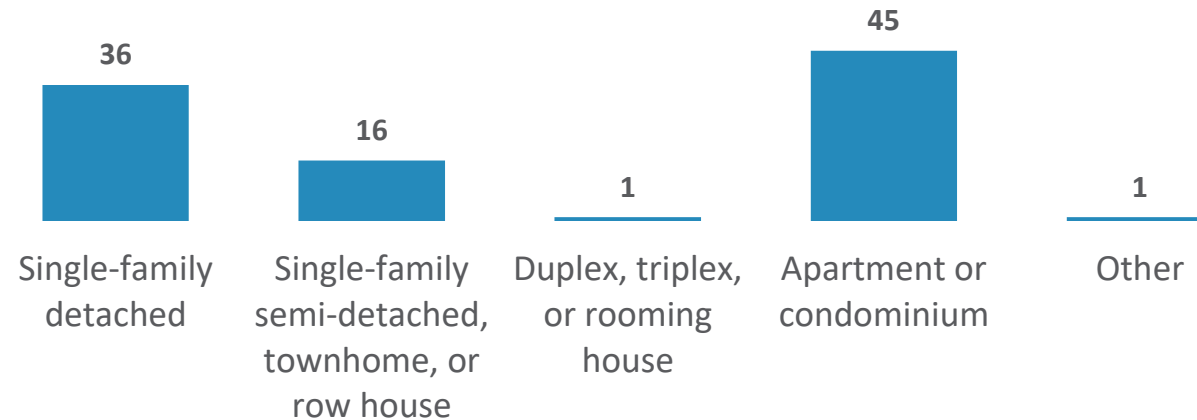
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## APPENDIX

**86%** have outdoor space at home for alcohol consumption.

- Respondents who live in an apartment building are much more likely to say that they do not have outdoor space at home for alcohol consumption (23%↑).

### Type of Housing and Outdoor Space



**95%** of those living in single family housing\* have outdoor space at home for alcohol consumption.  
**77%** of those living in an apartment or condominium have outdoor space.

Q1. Which of the following types of housing best describes where you live?

Q2. Do you have an outdoor space at your home where you can drink alcohol, if you wanted to? For example, a backyard, balcony, deck or terrace, or outdoor common area in a multi-unit building.

Base: Total sample n=800

\*Note: Single-family housing” includes those living in single-family detached, single-family semi-detached, townhomes, and row houses.